

"WHO IS THAT?" ASKED TOM. Page 14.

HIS BEST FRIEND

BY

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"FRESHMAN AND SENIOR," "MARJORIBANKS," ETC.

BOSTON

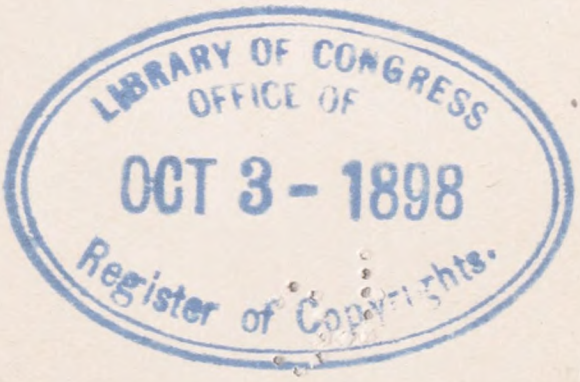
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HIS BEST FRIEND

CHAPTER I

LARAMIE'S ASSISTANT

"O Tom, please do! won't you?"

"Can't say for sure; mebbe." Tom's laughing brown eyes looked kindly enough down at the blue-eyed, red-haired little Kathie, as she sat in her chair by the window.

The other window in the room gave quite a fair view, but Kathie always preferred the one where she sat, for that looked out upon the roof of a neighboring tenement. That was interesting. Women and children came out there and hung up clothes, and gossiped, and played; and farther on across could be seen the rear balconies of a still higher tenement fronting on another street, and that was interesting, too.

"But, Tom, you have n't been by there for a week, and I want to hear what she plays now!"

"Well, all right; and I'll see if the blooms are out yet on that tree—horse-chestnut tree—that stands right by their house."

"Did you sell all your papers, Tom?"

"Every last one. Here, here's a card I got for you;" and he handed out to Kathie an advertising card which she placed on a pile of similar cards on the window-sill, after asking some questions about it.

"Want some water, Kathie? I'll go get you some fresh; then I'm goin'. I told mother Lide I'd come up and see how you were. I'll stop at the stand and tell her you are getting along all right. You've been crying though, I'll bet."

Kathie nodded in a shamefaced way. "I get so tired, and feel so cross, and ache so," she said simply.

Tom put his hand on the little white hand near him. "Poor Kathie!" he said, somewhat awkwardly. "I'll tell you something funny to-night. Mebbe I'll bring you something, too. Where did John go?"

"Hogan told him he could do errants for him all the morning."

"John's in luck; but I don't suppose it chirks him up any. He's the lonesomest-lookin' young un I ever come across in my life."

"John's the kindest boy ever was," said Kathie warmly.

"Oh, come now, Kathie, is he any kinder to you than I am?"

"John can't help being kind and he's kind to everybody. But, Tom, you're kind on purpose to me."

Tom laughed, the rollicking, catching sort of a laugh that always made any one smile just to hear him.

"Goin' now; good-bye!" and off he went rattlety bang down the tenement-house stairs, flight after flight, for they lived at the top, and went whistling up the street, teasing other boys, throwing anything he could find to throw, jumping over water plugs, alive to everything.

Mother Lide, the little old apple-woman, was the only relative Tom and John claimed, and she was no relative at all. She was not so old as she looked, and she looked very much like some of her own apples—some of the withered ones. She was a short, round little woman, with cheeks still red, rather dim eyes, and a kindly expression that won her a "mother" from every one.

Tom had drifted to that tenement from another part of the city and had established himself with Mother Lide and Kathie and John. He sold papers and managed to keep himself in more or less appropriate clothes, and paid over what he could to Mother Lide. He and John slept in a little room like a closet, though it had an outside window, off Mother Lide's main room, which was simply called "the room." Sometimes he got his meals from Mother Lide, but oftener he did n't.

John had lived in the tenement for six years, and Mother Lide said he was five years old when he

came. He had lived with a man who claimed to be blind, though he could see when sight was necessary. He had an organet and it was John's duty to lead him to his post and sit around with him all day while he ground out the two tunes the organet played. Four years previously the man died and John had been staying since with Mother Lide. He was a quiet, forlorn little boy, never in the way, always obliging, and painfully anxious to obliterate himself. At the same time he seemed to have very keen powers of observation and a sense of humor that made him very much liked by Tom and Kathie.

Kathie was Mother Lide's little granddaughter, and the boys supposed she was the only relative Mother Lide had until the afternoon they talked with Mr. Mulhaley. Mr. Mulhaley was in some respects the patriarch of the tenement, a slouchy, garrulous old soul, very much indulged by an unusually kind son, who took pride in having his father doze away his old age in comfort.

Tom and John were pitching pennies when Tom said: "I wonder why Mother Lide lets us stay with her, anyway. She gives us all the covers she can spare, and she always lets us eat when she 's got anything extra good, and lots of times she stays up late and washes and mends up our things."

"I 'll tell yer, byes, the why of it," said Mr. Mulhaley, who was sunning himself near by. "Mother Lide, *she's* seen a power o' trouble, I 'll be havin'

yer know. Her man was a howly terror, if I 've me ricollictions about me, and she had a power o' childer, a dozen I 'll swear to. The eldest girl, she married and had the little—Kathie is it ye call her? And she died, and Mother Lide had the little one. No; the child was n't lame then. It 's her grandfather's doin's that she 's niver stepped around lively like other childer since she 's two years old. Well, all Mother Lide's other childer died babies, savin' Billy, the one that was born and got raised up a bit while his father was sent up. Billy was a strampin', tearin' broth of a bye, that he was, and a koind heart into the bargain; as clever a spalpeen as ever yez clapped eyes on. But there was a set of men around here that was no good, and they were in for havin' Billy wan of thim, and they buttered their tongues for the bye, and they got him in that deep gettin' out was just hopeless. And his mother cryin' her eyes out, and that afraid of the police! You see her man was done for, and she might have had peace with her bye and the slip of a gal. But things went worse, and when the little one was in the hospital yet, he lit out, and she 's niver clapped eyes on him since. Well, Mother Lide she give up lookin' for Billy, but she allers had a soft spot in her heart for byes and many and many 's the good turn she 's done bits o' byes around this coort."

"Well, I never!" said Tom. "Why do n't that Billy come back?"

"Taken up, likely," said Mr. Mulhaley laconically.

The story made a good deal of impression on both the boys. Tom became zealous to have more earnings to pay for his lodging, and to bring home some extra treat for a meal, and John was more openly helpful about the stand and about cheering up Kathie.

As Tom went on down toward Mother Lide's apple-stand he could not help thinking how pitiful Kathie looked, and how anxious she was that he should go down that quiet side street he had told her about, where in one of the houses a young lady so often played such pretty tunes on the piano—tunes which he in turn would whistle for Kathie.

"Well, I 'll go, sure," he thought.

So that afternoon he wandered down the street Kathie loved best to hear about.

It was a warm, beautiful day, and the quiet street seemed like a very peaceful spot. The occasional trees, all horse-chestnuts, in their tree boxes, cast flickering shadows on the sidewalks. The high stoops looked shady and inviting; curtains at open windows puffed in and out, and the tree in front of the particular house Tom came to see was in bloom.

The house itself, however, was a changed place. Straws littered the steps; through the open windows of the parlor, furniture could be seen sewed up in gunny-cloth.

"Movin'!" ejaculated Tom, scenting a possible job; and he seated himself on the curbing to see what would happen next.

Inside the house the process of packing was in various stages of development. The down-stairs room fronting the street was bare and stiff, occupied only by furniture dressed in traveling suits, whereas in the room behind little progress had been made. A flushed, pretty young lady with curly and somewhat disordered hair was sitting on the floor sorting over things. The things were her own and dearly treasured, and she was supposed to be putting them into traveling order and transferring them as they were sorted into boxes. At present she was arranging photographs—photographs not of people but of paintings. They were all destined for her room up-stairs, where she meant to pack them in a trunk with some other sacred treasures.

"Now if they were only up-stairs," she thought, "instead of down here; but I have run up and down stairs until I am sick of it. I wish we had a boy or somebody. There is never anybody on this street. I believe I'll go down to the corner and see if I can find a boy."

She looked around the room rather despairingly. "What an unpractical sort of a family we are, anyway! And how we do hate to move! And we can't get our things together!"

She laughed to think how when the packers came

almost everything they touched roused a cry of, "Oh, no! do n't take that—*that* is n't ready!"

"There 's father worrying over his manuscripts up in the study; and Aunt Mary—poor, dear soul!—getting together her relics; and me fussing over these photographs. Dear! dear! I just will find a boy—anything for a diversion!"

She tucked up her hair, pulled out and put in two or three hairpins, shook out her dress, and went to the front door.

There sat a boy on the curb.

"A dispensation!" she murmured.

"What is your name?" she asked, as Tom looked up at her.

"Tom."

"I want you to come in and help me pack."

Her voice had a confident, pleasant, rather imperative little ring in it that brought Tom up the steps, cap in hand, in very quick order. The laugh in his eyes found a match in the eyes of his new employer.

"Come right in here," and she led him back to the room she had just deserted. She piled as much as he could possibly carry in a large basket, put the remaining things she wanted in another, and led him up-stairs. The room they entered was large and sunny, with a few geraniums in one window, three open trunks, and four small packing-boxes. All sorts of things were strewn on the bed, sofa, chairs, and floor.

Miss Roslyn looked around with a despairing gesture.

"Tom, can you tie up packages?"

"Yes 'm; I've often done it."

"Good! I shall sort these pictures into sets as fast as I can, and you may tie them up for me. Perhaps I shall begin to make some headway at last."

Tom sat on the floor and watched her sort the photographs. She had a very complete collection of the old masters, and those she sorted first. Tom tied them carefully, and Laramie stowed them away in a box with a sigh of relief. Then she began to make up sets of pictures of modern paintings. Her arrangement was hasty, and consisted simply in putting landscapes together, regardless of artist or date, and genre pictures together, and historical pictures together, and religious pictures together. Whatever was left she hastily dubbed miscellaneous and put those together.

One set she handed Tom had a picture on top that he could not stop looking at. A boy of about his own age was sitting in the foreground of a carpenter's shop, looking straight out at Tom. It was a lovable enough little boy's face—a healthy, nice little boy—but the eyes seemed to Tom to be looking right through him, and to have a wonderful expression of confidence and love. The boy had a clumsy knife and a bit of wood in his hand, and seemed to have just stopped whittling.

"Who 's that?" asked Tom.

Laramie leaned over to see.

"Is n't he a dear? I just love that picture!"

"Who is it?"

Then Laramie's face sobered. After a moment's thought she said quietly,—

"Some one has tried to paint a picture of Jesus when he was a little boy. You know who Jesus was?"

"Not him—only a dead Jesus."

"Jesus was the Son of God—God, who made everything, you know—and he was born on this earth a baby, and lived, quite a long time ago, in another country. This picture shows him in a carpenter's shop, because he lived in one. He lived a poor little boy; but," very earnestly, "it was a clean, sweet, wholesome sort of poor—not the shiftless, dirty poor."

Tom blushed, but raised his eyes from the picture and looked steadily at Laramie. She stopped, and he said hastily, "Then what?"

"Oh, you can go into any church or any Sunday-school, or ask almost anybody, and hear all about him. You ought to do it. However, he lived a whole boyhood, and so, of course, he knows all about boys, and you can depend upon it that every boy who played with him learned to want to be kind and true and pure—the best sort of a boy—because that was the kind he was. When he grew up he

spent his time doing what he was born to do, and suffered a dreadful death, and"—

"Oh, he *is* dead!"

Laramie looked at Tom curiously; then she leaned toward him in a confidential way and in a low tone said, "Tom, there's more to it than that. Now listen. It won't be everybody who can tell you this."

Tom fixed his intent brown eyes on hers.

"He came to earth for the whole world. He lived a little child for all children. But it wasn't enough just to have been there in Nazareth. Now—now that he is no longer held to one spot by the earthly body that he took—now he lives for and with all who can believe him, and know him and love him. And to children, believe me," Laramie seemed to be both exerting and feeling a strange fascination, "he is a child still, knows a child's heart, thinks a child's thoughts. That little boy," pointing to the picture, "is your little boy friend, always with you, glad in your gladness, grieved in your sorrow, ready to share with you *life*—his life—the life that cannot die, the strength that cannot fail, the courage that knows no discouragement, victory that never dreamed of defeat. And you haven't known it! Mustn't it have been hard for him, when he waited beside you with his whole, fresh boy heart,—that you wouldn't see him, nor heed him, nor care?"

Tom's eyes were opened wide, and his lips parted.

"Could n't you go right on and amount to anything great you wanted to, with him to care and be glad? Would n't you hate anything mean and dirty, and low-minded, and untrue, with him to feel shame for you? Would n't you easily choose what is brave and strong and good, with him beside you?"

She stopped short and went on sorting pictures. Tom tied diligently, but was evidently absorbed in thought. Laramie watched him with the keenest interest. A warm color rose in his face; his brow would knit slightly and then relax. His square little chin seemed to acquire a curious firmness, and just as Laramie resolved to ask him a question he turned directly to her.

"Do you suppose it 's too late now to square it up with him? I 'd like him to know how glad I 'd be to have him keep on around with me, and how sorry I am I 've been so unnoticin' before."

"Oh, he knows now," said Laramie quickly. "He 's different from a friend you have to explain things to. You 'll be somebody worth while now, Tom. There; we have done splendidly with these things! Take this basket to the door at the end of the hall; knock and give it to Aunt Mary; call her Miss Roslyn; ask her if she wants you to help her. I 'll be there in a minute."

CHAPTER II

THE TENEMENT FEAST

The Roslyns were, as Laramie had said, a very impractical family.

Mr. Roslyn was a minister, but he had never had a church. Although he had something of the orator in his make-up, a nervous difficulty prevented his being even a partial success in the pulpit. He was a student, a scholar. A small fortune shared by his sister, the lame Miss Roslyn, had enabled him to live in comfortable quiet, and to give his daughter Laramie such advantages as she desired.

A recent failure, however, had involved him to such an extent that it was no longer possible to keep their home and live as they had been living. A brother, David Roslyn, a merchant in another city, had proposed that his brother, sister, and niece should make their home with him. The rent of their house and Laramie's small inheritance from her mother would then enable them to do very well. This seemed to be the only feasible plan and was one they all agreed to, but moving presented harrowing difficulties to all of them.

Miss Roslyn, dear, good soul, was well on the way to tears, of a not altogether sorrowful sort, over the

things she was unearthing from her drawers and boxes, when Tom knocked at the door.

"Come in, Laramie," was the reply that made Tom chuckle.

"It's a basket of things, Miss Roslyn, the—that young lady sent here," said Tom when he opened the door. "I'm Tom. I'm helping pack."

"Now that is nice," was the hearty answer.

"She said—that young lady did—I was to ask if you did n't want me to help you."

He saw at a glance that she was lame, and he was wide awake to see how she felt about it and what she could do. Poor Kathie! Tom had been troubled more than he would have liked to own by Kathie's crying fits, for she was naturally the brightest-tempered little thing that ever was.

"Yes, indeed; I do. I want that work-basket over there, and I shall be glad to have you do several things. It is very nice for an old lame woman like me to have a handy boy around."

How pleasant, how jolly she did look! Tom determined to find out the cause of it, if possible. "I do n't see how you can keep so—so pleasant—looking, when you are lame," he said bluntly.

"Lameness is n't much. I had thirty years of going around on two legs and that was enough, probably. I was in a railroad accident. Now that would interest you, would n't it? Of course it would. Give me that clean towel, please, and that box. Thank you."

"But now you are n't walking," persisted Tom, "how can you keep so satisfied?"

"Why, my dear boy, why should n't I be happy? Perhaps I have my blue moments sometimes, but who is there who does n't? I am ashamed of it quickly enough. A boy of your age does n't know what comfort there is in this," picking up from the table by her side a New Testament bound in flexible Russia leather. "The very thought of the loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ"—Tom looked surprised—"of his constant sympathy, takes me right out of myself. That 's where we all want to get—out of ourselves. I 'll be preaching you a sermon, my dear. Now the ebony box—the black one. Perhaps you do n't understand how Jesus can do so much for me?"

Tom had an odd feeling that close beside him stood that clear-eyed boy, listening as he listened, disseminating in some way peace, health, goodness, and that Miss Roslyn did n't know it—not as he knew it.

"I should think he might do a great deal for you," he said quietly, and Miss Roslyn stopped her work to look at him.

"Perhaps you know some one who is lame?" she said.

"I do," promptly. "Kathie is lame; she can't walk, and she cries and wants to play. Her grandmother sells apples all day, and sometimes when it's pleasant we can get Kathie down to the stand, but

she aches and gets tired. And she 's nice, too, when she chirks up."

"Poor darling, can she read?"

"No 'm; she can't read."

"She could entertain herself if she had something nice to read."

"That 's so. She likes stories John tells her."

"Now the hamper. You are a great help."

Tom was disappointed. He had thought that this smiling little lame lady might perhaps know of some enchanted powder or drink which could assure happiness to a cripple.

"I should think a doctor would be better than that book," he hazarded.

Miss Roslyn looked at him in astonishment. It was hard to make Tom's remarks match.

"Why, I had doctors; plenty of them. God helps those who help themselves, and he has put us in the way of being able to help ourselves a great deal. But the doctors were n't able to keep me from being a cripple. Our Saviour is the greatest of all doctors. Do n't you know Jesus is called the Great Physician?"

"When was he?" flashed out Tom.

"Why, for three years there in his own country, after he grew to be a man, he went around healing the sick, making the lame walk, opening the eyes of the blind, comforting and blessing the crowds who followed him."

Again there came over Tom that strangely real, vivid sense of the boy quietly beside him carried back by those words to other times and places, but still voluntarily, staunchly, readily beside him. How great and wonderful and grand he must have been! —and yet right there with him!

"He can do what no other doctor can do. He can cure the soul, and a well soul, my dear boy, is in many cases the surest cure for a sick body. And though there seems to be no good reason for my being cured of my lameness, I enjoy the very best of health, and I am as happy as any one I know. Isn't that a great deal for a doctor to do?"

"Yes 'm." He was feeling somewhat confused.

"Yes, indeed, dear; you will always find that after we have availed ourselves of the most distinguished medical aid that money can buy, we still can have a far greater service done for us by the Great Physician, free."

"Well, free doctorin' is the sort for Kathie, sure."

"There, the very thing!" exclaimed Miss Roslyn. "Wasn't it odd I should come across it now! This is a sort of a tract. It isn't anything I would think of giving a great, strong, two-legged creature like you, but it is about a little lame girl, and what she did, and how she got along, and I want you to read it. It will give you ideas. You will see some very nice things to do for Kathie, and you will find it will be just the thing to help her. How old is she?"

"Eight or nine. She 's little, with the prettiest red hair, sort of curly, and the bluest sort of eyes, just as round! I 'll be awful glad of that book! Kathie does n't have any fun, only just advertisement cards, and she 's getting sick of those, and John plays jacks some with her."

There was a knock at the door, followed by Laramie's amused face.

"Such a talking as there has been going on in this room! Aunt Mary, I do n't believe you 've done a thing! Tom, I want you to come to my father's study, and I want you to take down every single book off the shelves. There 's a small step-ladder there. You are to set them anywhere on the floor, and once that is done I think I can persuade father to pack. Now you need n't mind father, Tom. He is reading an article out loud, and he will read right at you, and shake his head at you and all; but you need n't mind; he won't have an idea you are a real boy."

"Good-bye, Tom," said Miss Roslyn. "Shake hands with me, dear."

Tom had never been "deared" so much in one day before, though Mother Lide was not averse to warm expressions, and he grew quite red in the face as he said a hearty good-bye.

"Here, in here," and Laramie gave Tom a push into the study.

Mr. Roslyn stood by a littered-up table reading—

or speaking—with great vigor. Tom tried to suppress his interest and even anxiety, and went to work on the books at once. Mr. Roslyn was warming up to his speech in fine style. Somewhat to Tom's consternation he directed his remarks particularly to him, waving his arms and banging the table. Tom liked anything energetic, and in a few moments he was listening, entranced, to Mr. Roslyn's periods. There was very little that he could make much sense of, but the new words sounded well to him, and some of the things that were said startled him almost to the point of dropping the books.

"The grandeur of the historic Christ, Jesus the Christ! Think of it all! The nations of the earth lay in darkness, the Jew in blind conceit, the Greek groping for the unknown God, the Roman sodden with lust and pride. And then there unrolled before the eyes of men a new dawn. The Light of the world was made flesh. The manger, the carpenter shop, the cross, and the tomb. We call it the humiliation! Not so! It was a triumph, God's victory. Any soul made mighty by spiritual communion knows nothing lower than its own free soul-life. Much more so with the Lord of all. The manger, the shop, the cross, the tomb, received a new rank—but they could confer nothing."

Tom finally gave in completely and sat down, basely giving over his labors, and listened. He had never heard any one go on that way.

"The Christ! the Christ! consciously eternal, magnificently pitying, grandly content in his own brief earth-life to teach that one lesson hardest to learn, that *life* is *being*, that our best and highest must be lived out, not heeding results."

Tom waited in suspense after Mr. Roslyn had reached a very climax of oratory, and then thrilled through and through as the speaker lowered his voice and said solemnly, looking straight at Tom:

"Live earnestly. Know what life is. Confound it not with death. Be a light in a dark place. See that the chain of signal fires to light the world fails not for lack of your life-fire. Do your part to win the world for Jesus."

Mr. Roslyn wiped his face with his handkerchief and exclaimed, "Why is it I never could do that in a pulpit? Why, where did you come from?" staring fixedly at Tom.

"A young lady sent me up here to take down books and—and—you talked so splendid, I just had to stop and listen."

"Did she, indeed! Of course; and I preached to you, did I? How did you like it?" with a benevolent smile.

"Bully!" was the enthusiastic answer. "Wish 't I could talk like that!"

"You can! Make up your mind to and you can! Fill yourself with your subject, Christ Jesus, the Christ! Think Christ! Dream Christ! Live

Christ! It is a magnificent subject. Everything else pales into insignificance beside it. You will be red-hot with eloquence. If you feel the wonder of it all, press forward into the ranks. I suppose you are one of Laramie's Sunday-school boys? You hear fine preaching every Sunday, and Laramie herself, I hope, is not without zeal for the kingdom."

Tom was sure he had lost his bearings entirely when the door opened and in came Laramie.

"Can't have you stay any longer, Tom. I must say I can't see that you have done any great execution on those books," she said reproachfully, glancing at the shelves.

"I 'll hurry like everything if you can only let me wait a little," said Tom eagerly. He felt ashamed but he did n't know what to say. Seeing that Laramie did not refuse, he made what speed he could and with sufficient success to win back a smile of good-humored approval to Laramie's face.

"Well, you can work; that 's a fact. I wish we were not going to leave the city, Tom, so I could become better acquainted with you."

"Oh, I shall be better acquainted with you some day," was Tom's cheerful answer.

Laramie paid him, and with his little tract for Kathie and a college catalogue and a library catalogue in which Mr. Roslyn had considerately marked some books suitable for an advanced student, Tom felt that his worldly goods had consider-

ably increased. As he took off his cap and nodded a last good-bye to Laramie and went on slowly down the street, he had a queer sensation of having been gone for years in a strange new world. He went so far as to shake himself and look at his clothes. As he did so, the words "clean, sweet, wholesome sort of poor," came back to him.

"Of course *you* won't want me to be dirty if that's the case," he thought, and running as fast as he could to the point where he could see the nearest clock, he found he had still time for the penny baths. To the penny baths he went, found room enough, and a better scrubbing he never had since he was born. His shirt and trowsers were no better than they had been before, but he had a "clean, sweet, and wholesome" feeling, no matter how he looked. "And if I don't get a piece of soap and get Mother Lide to let me wash these here togs this very night, I'll know the reason why." Wouldn't Kathie be glad to know what had happened to him at the Roslyns? Then he had a sudden desire to do something to brighten Kathie up. And he knew John would like to help. As he ran on toward the tenement he saw John just ahead of him.

"Hi there, John!"

John turned.

"Hello! Say, did Hogan pay you?"

"No. Said he would some other day."

"Old fake! Say, come on around there with me

and you just keep quiet and let me run things, only you agree to everything I do. I 've got a quarter. Had the rummest go you ever heard of. I 'll tell you all about it. Let 's give Kathie and Mother Lide a raving, tearing, bumptious spread. Kathie 's just pining away, and a little fun will fix her up good. Now we 'll go to Hogan's, and I 'll get some things for your pay."

John's face looked a bit less solemn. "Do you think he 'll give anything?"

"You just see if he do n't!"

"He 's awful mean," said John.

"Do n't I know that?"

"Say, Mr. Hogan," said Tom, as they entered the store, "John do n't want money for his errants this time; we 're going to have a high jinks and we want eatin' things; nothing bad, neither."

"He did n't earn much," grumbled Mr. Hogan.

"Come off! I know what he earned. Now, say, I want some strawberries; honest, I do, and some crackers, and some of those little cakes you 've got there, and I want a can of salmon, and a loaf of bread."

Mr. Hogan laughed outright.

"Now you 'll see me get 'em, too. You 're not going to lose one thing by this, Mr. Hogan. I 'll make it all right for you," with a lordly air, "but I 'm going to look around," and finally, by arguing and chaffing and making Mr. Hogan alternately angry and amused, he got about what he wanted.

"There now, John," said Tom, as they left the store with their packages, "this is your spread instead of mine, and I want you to take five cents and buy something for Kathie, a real present. You 'll get something she 'll like better 'n I will. I never can think of things. Then you go on up and get fixed for the show, and I 'll go on and help Mother Lide. Can you carry them all? Hurry up," and away dashed Tom.

John was nearer to feeling like having a sphere than he usually felt as he proceeded to expend his five-cent piece. It did n't take him long. Around at the milk depot in the next street they had little potted plants for sale, and John bought a nice little fragrant violet for his five cents.

Carrying his packages carefully, he toiled up the long stairway, fearful lest some one should run into him, or some boy knock his things out of his arms; but the top was completed in safety and Kathie turned eagerly toward the door as he came in.

"Oh, John," she sobbed, "I 'm so glad you 've come."

"What 's the matter, Kathie?" he asked, gently.

"Oh, there has n't been anybody in at all, not once, and I 'm so tired, and—oh, John! what 's all that?" brightening up at the sight of the packages.

"Something splendid, Kathie! A good spread, and I earned it. Tom said I did." He picked out the things. "He 's gone for Mother Lide, and we are to get everything ready, you and me, Kathie."

Kathie was clapping her hands, half laughing and half crying.

"You must n't look at the things just yet, Kathie. You tell me what to put on the table and I 'll do just what you say."

"Oh, we 'll have the table in the middle, so we can all sit around, and I 'll get the cloth."

Kathie seized her little old crutches and limped over to the chest of drawers. Out came a white table-cloth, one of her mother's treasures. John played he was a waiter, and threw the cloth over the table with a grand air, swelling his chest out, and making military turns that quite convulsed Kathie.

"Why, John, you can be just as funny as Tom!" she exclaimed in the greatest admiration.

Then John put on the cups and plates, carrying them high above his head on his finger-tips, and making a low bow to Kathie every time he set anything down.

"Now, Kathie, you look out the window till I say look."

And Kathie stared out of the window, doing her best not to turn around, though she almost did twice.

"Now look!"

"Oh, John!" cried Kathie. "Oh, how pretty!"

The fragrant little violet was right in the middle of the table.

"John, did you buy that, too?"

"Why, I bought it, but Tom gave me the money

to get it. He told me to buy something for you. And you just ought to see Tom, Kathie. He looked so clean and nice. Tom is awful handsome."

Kathie's eyes glowed assent.

"There, Mother Lide's coming! Tom's ahead; I can hear his step."

Kathie always called her grandmother Mother Lide, just as everybody did, and as for Mother Lide, little Kathie had come to her just after the death of her youngest child and had always seemed to her to be that child—one of her own. The little thing's deformity, caused by her grandfather, had been one of Mother Lide's keenest sorrows, and it was becoming daily almost more than she could bear to leave the child, growing visibly weaker, to suffer all day by herself. The neighbors were kind, but Kathie pined for her grandmother or the boys. The comfort it had been to Mother Lide to have Tom and John kind to Kathie was unspeakable. John was quite to be depended upon to stay with her and befriend her, but he had odd jobs to do, running errands or minding somebody's baby.

This had been a hard day for Mother Lide, for she knew John might have to work for Hogan all day and her quick insight had told her that Tom found Kathie crying and lonesome when he had seen her at noon. She was glad when the day was over and doubly glad that Tom came to help her get home with her barrow.

"You 're a good, kind boy, Tom," she said for the fourth time, as they reached the landing outside her room. She almost hated to go in to hear Kathie's sobbing cry of welcome.

Tom threw open the door and stood there, a good broad smile on his face, while Mother Lide looked in as astonished as could be desired. The last rays of sunlight still slanted through the window, illuminating Kathie's curly red hair and pale little face, all alive with joy; it touched up the forks and spoons evenly placed on the unaccustomed white cloth; and the berries and the violet and all the things had a most flaunting festal air. John stood by the table, his grave, philosophic countenance showing a quiet appreciation of all the phases of the scene.

"And where am I, for sure ?" exclaimed Mother Lide.

"Oh, Mother Lide! It 's a feast! Do n't it be beautiful? The boys did it! Oh, I 'm so happy!"

"I 'm hardly knowin' if I 'm meself; and its grand, Tom; I might be seeing you looked different. It 's all honest doin's, is it?" quickly to him.

"Honest? course!" laughed Tom. "It 's John's spread. You 'd know John was honest, would n't you ?"

"Oh, yes; I 'm knowin' Johnnie would be honest," with a kind look at John.

All the time she was bustling about, and in a few minutes the impatient little crowd sat down at the table.

Tom had never before eaten off a table-cloth. He had felt as though he was in a wholly new world all the afternoon and now, though back in his old familiar quarters, the world was still not the same.

"And it never will be the same again, for now you know Me."

Tom did not feel like looking around for a voice to say that. Already he had a perfect consciousness of a companionship not outside of nor apart from himself, but of Some One capable of presenting himself to an inner consciousness—the real Tom. There was something strangely, happily satisfying about it. He accepted it at once without question or analysis. Happy-go-lucky, mischievous, rather bad little street boy that he was, with a hand for every fight, and with ears and eyes for every bit of evil, just as material and concrete as he could be, this new companionship was nevertheless accepted at once as natural, possible, and precious beyond expression. He seemed awake to everything he had been awake to before, and much more. He had never felt so near Mother Lide, Kathie, and John. He had never looked at them with such intelligent, seeing eyes. He seemed to understand and know things of the heart that had never occurred to him before.

"How nice you look, Tom!" said Mother Lide as she began to help out the things.

"Tell about getting your quarter, Tom," put in John.

"Say, Mother Lide, I want you to let me wash my clothes to-night. Will you? I won't make a slop, or I'll clean it up if I do."

"I'll wash 'em for you, Tommy, lad."

"Well, you just won't! you're tired enough. John can wash his, too, can't he? And we'll wash anything you want, to make up for the trouble. John's always hating his things dirty."

Kathie was eating her berries, with the manner of a little epicurean, and they all saw to it that she had the lion's share. Her mobile little face looked so happy!

"Oh, tell me about the quarter, Tom."

So Tom detailed his adventures. Kathie asked the most questions; John listened with a quite breathless eagerness when Tom told of the library with all the books, and of Mr. Roslyn's talking away in resounding periods. Tom did not think of trying to repeat anything he heard, but he described everything in a quick, vivid way that reproduced the whole adventure.

"And I've got the book, Kathie, right in my pocket, that the lame Miss Roslyn gave me, and it will tell a power of things."

"When will you read it, Tom?" asked Mother Lide, eagerly. She could not read herself, and she was afraid the fateful moment would pass, and the mysteries of the book remain a secret. "You won't go out again to-night, will you? I'll let there be a light, and you can read what the book says."

Although Tom had rarely been in there except in the bitterest weather until he came in to sleep, he felt very glad of the chance. He was as anxious to see what the book might contain as any one.

They all assisted in the clearing up of the great feast, and Tom did his best songs and a clog-dance, and told funny stories until Kathie laughed and laughed again. John remained unobtrusively enjoying Tom's brilliancy, and Mother Lide, with the open cheerfulness of her temperament, laughed and admired and spurred Tom on to the top of his bent.

"Faith, and I do n't be knowin' when I 've had such a good time," said she.

Then the lamp was lit, and Tom sat down to read the little book to the others.

CHAPTER III

JOHN'S IDEAS

It was a pretty story that Tom read; a story of a little lame girl and her brothers and older sisters; of how they all tried to make a living, and of all the ways and contrivances they devised to make both ends meet. The story told how the little lame girl helped, and how she was the best loved by them all. Tom was not a very rapid reader, and the story was still unfinished when Mother Lide had already fallen asleep in her chair. Kathie was all eyes and ears. She did not know very much about stories, and the narrative was full of a mysterious charm for her. John liked it almost as well. Books always fascinated him. He was always wishing for a book, some sort of a book; as yet he did not care what.

And Tom was keenly alive to what he was reading for the suggestions it contained. The story family really did things. One boy worked in a fancy store, and one boy worked in a pasteboard box factory. They each were given, or allowed to take, all sorts of odds and ends, bits of paper, tissues, colored tying ribbons, tinsel scraps. The little lame girl and one sister made these things up into gayly dressed paper dolls, which were disposed

of very readily. Tom had a feeling that it was an unusual concatenation of events that made everything dovetail so beautifully, and result in such satisfactory money returns; still, it seemed to be an unusual family, their two rooms were so pretty, their food was so excellently managed; they were so gifted and skilful.

Tom did not want to doubt that nice little book, but he did. One thing about the story aroused his strongest interest. There were constant references to Jesus Christ, to his words, to their prayers to him for guidance, to his care for them. Tom had a dim comprehension of what was meant, but it seemed very difficult and complicated to him. The real, living presence beside him, within him, of his new friend, Jesus, as he came to him, was so plain and simple.

"I am right here with you now. You need n't mind about anything else now." Tom knew He said that.

It had been a very strange day, so strange that when Tom lay down on the little pile of things he called his bed, in the closet-like room, his head was in a whirl—a happy sort of whirl.

Tom was not a boy to get muddled, or stay muddled. When he awoke in the morning, a little thinking made things very clear to his mind. He was himself, Tom Hart, but he was a very different boy from the Tom Hart he remembered tumbling

out of that bed the morning before. That Tom Hart was a decidedly ignorant, blind kind of a boy. He lived in a crowded tenement, where he had lots of friends, and where there was always fun to be had in the street, day or night, especially night, and that was all he had ever thought of. To go on selling papers, to get bigger, to get in with the older gang, to do all the mischief he could, in a general way—he had never thought any further than that.

He was still himself, Tom Hart, but there was new life in him. He lived in a crowded tenement, but he was n't going to stay there always. He was a dirty, no-account boy, and Mother Lide and Mr. Mulhaley, and others, could tell him, and had told him, what he was coming to—to some such pass as Mother Lide's Billy, or any of the other tenement-house boys who were bright and restless, had come to. But now it was to be different.

His clothes were dry. They did not have the appearance of having been done up in a first-class laundry, he meditated, but they were comparatively clean, and he felt clean in them. He felt ten degrees more honest than he had felt the day before. Yesterday he had scarcely known, and had not cared, whether there was any world beyond his city or not, nor whether there had been any time and history before his own little life began, or not. To-day, he was tinglingly alive to the fact that his city was but one, that there was more of his world, very far off.

In time, there stretched back behind him a past, a shadowy, dim past, illuminated, beautified, made unspeakably grand by that Son of God who came to earth. And Tom had a yearning feeling of interest in, and kinship with, that past, and all that it meant of love and help; for was not Jesus living, a boy, with him again? The eager acceptance of the fact was a part of the promptitude and energy of his nature. All the hero worship, all the reverence of which any eager-hearted boy is capable, were bound over to this felt boy friend, who, to Tom, in some way still had that grandly awful destiny of his manhood to fulfil, even though in fact it had been accomplished, Tom knew not how long before.

This boy was brave, strong, pure, helpful—had n't Miss Roslyn said all that? Then Tom must be so, too. Was he clean and wholesome and true? Then Tom must be so, too. That was a long way to travel since yesterday.

"I will, I will," thought Tom, with set lips.

"What you thinking about, Tom?" asked John, who had been looking at him for some moments.

"I—I—I do n't know," hesitated Tom.

He would have liked to tell John what he was thinking about, but he had no words. It was all new ground to him. He felt his impressions though he had not the ability to put them into speech.

"I was thinking about that young lady and the lame lady and the man. They all talked so different."

"What did they say?"

"The lame lady said Jesus Christ was a doctor and helped her feel well."

"Where does he live?"

"I do n't know," said Tom, impatiently, recognizing how different was the idea his words conveyed to John from the idea Miss Roslyn's words conveyed to him.

"We might get him for Kathie, if we could see him and beg him," said John, thoughtfully.

"Miss Roslyn, the young lady, said Jesus was the Son of God, and was born on earth a long time ago, and grew up and helped people, and died."

"Whatever did the lame lady mean, then?"

"They made out that by dying he was able to help lots more people than he did when he was alive."

"Oh, get out."

"I mean he could be around near people now, chirking them up if they would take heed of him, helping them strike out their own badness, and that when that was done people felt a sight better."

Quite a new light flashed over John's face. "Why does he do this?"

"I do n't know. The young lady said anybody could tell—or in any church or Sunday-school we could find out!"

"Tell some more."

Tom felt so baffled by the difference between his

report of what he had heard and what he had understood them to say or mean, that he felt half angry.

"*You* tell him—help me—what shall I say?" he was conscious of inwardly begging. Then he went on:

"The lame lady seemed to feel that Jesus helped her just as he was when he was grown on earth. He left some words for her in a little book, and she took a heap of comfort in them—had it on a table. The man, he didn't seem to talk much about his getting helped; he talked about how you ought to know just how to tell all about what Jesus told before, or did, and then tell it, or do it, or be it—a sort of a torch—oh, I don't seem to know what he did say, anyway."

"What did the young lady say?"

"She said He was ready to just be your best friend and stay right with you, and if you'd care to have him for a friend he'd stick by you right through, thick and thin; only she said he was the kind of a boy, when he was a boy, that was straight and square and honest and true and brave and kind, and all them things, clean and all, and that other boys that really were around with him got to be that kind themselves."

"Was that the reason you took a swim and washed your things?"

"Yep."

John's face wore a really bright, happy look.

"I'm awful glad you told me, Tom," he said, softly.

Tom's eyes shone. He felt glad himself.

"What I was thinking of, John," he went on, "was about that book, and that little lame girl, and what all we can do for Kathie. Seem 's though I 'd just been blind. If I did a jig for her when I was in, I thought I did enough. If I had to sit in that room all day, I would n't just cry sometimes, I 'd cry till I died, so!"

"I went to bed thinking about it," admitted John. "I thought and thought. *We* do n't hold out in no fancy store nor box factory, and if we did Kathie could n't make paper dolls no more than nothin'. Where 'd their heads come from, I 'd like to know? I thought of some things, though. Last night I thought they were pretty good."

"John, you 're the boss hand when it comes to thinking," said Tom admiringly. "Out with it."

"Well, there 's that old German woman on the third landing; you know they don't mix in much yet, not bein' here very long and bein' so Germany. You know that white-headed baby; his name 's Hanshen or something like that, and the mother—she scrubs out some places up town—got me to watch him outdoors while he took some air. Well, when I took him back, the grandmother told me to come in, and she knit every minute. She said: "Ich knit

diese für das shop vas buys mine tings und pays me goot moneys, yah."

John laughed softly at the recollection, and Tom doubled himself over in his endeavor not to laugh out loud, for they had not yet heard Mother Lide.

"Now if we could just get some of those things she had, and some yarn, you know, and then could get the old woman to sit up here and show Kathie how to knit and be company for her, while she was showing her, would n't that be great? I thought maybe she would come for my tending the baby. I could take the baby down to the river-wall by the little park and it would be great if they'd trust me."

Tom slapped his knee. "That's the talk, John; and I 'll just hustle selling papers. She shall have all the yarn and needles she wants. That beats paper dolls all holler. Dan made five dollars last week selling papers, and they do say Larry made seven. I know I can hustle a heap more 'n I have. Did you think of anything else?"

"Yes, I did; and it won't hurt about the knitting, either. I been hanging around that hothouse place, up by the statue, and I got an errand in there once, and I just seen all I could, and there was a clever sort of a man fussing around, and he told me a lot, neat 's a pin. He showed me great, long, wide sort of shelves with a board around them, all full of little teenty bits of pots, and in the pots were little teenty bits of plants, some in bloom. Nearly all

of them you could get for five cents each. Kathie's violet was n't but five cents; some he said were raised from seeds, and he said you could get a lot of seeds for five cents. Now you know there's not more than one or two plants in this whole tenement beside the German woman's; while down in the Italian court, and it 's ten hundred times nastier and dirtier than ours, nearly every window has got a pot of flowers or something growing.

"Now I thought you and I could put some shelves in our two windows—this window would make three, —and get all the little tins and cans and things—hunt for them around the court barrels you know—and we could set lots."

"I should think we could!" interjected Tom.

"And then get dirt for her—any place they 're building we could get some, and sand too—I saw lots of sand in the hothouse—and fill them up and buy some seeds. I'd just make an errand into that hothouse and find out all about the prettiest seeds and the dirt and water and all, I just would; and Kathie could raise flowers, and if they were pretty and did well she could sell 'em right here in our tenement."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, "I don't believe there's a child but could beg up five cents from his folks and get a plant. Cracky! We'd have a flower show, we would! We'd fix up the court, and all hands in, and sell out. We'd have doings. Remember our

concert last summer? Ryan told me last summer he'd hire me this summer down to his saloon some nights to do mouth organ and jew's-harp specialties. I could make money that way. I'll just practise up."

John's face wore the ghost of a smile. "Mr. Mulhaley said Mother Lide's Billy was a regular draw down to Ryan's one spell."

"That's so; he did. I wish he'd come back. I'd like to see him."

"What you boys talking about?" said Mother Lide. "It's buzz, buzz, buzz. Time you was off, Tom."

"All right! Off I am, then. We've got a big scheme for Kathie, Mother Lide. You'll like it!"

"Faith, Tom, I always thought you'd the kind heart, but yesterday and to-day you're twice the boy you ever was before. Sure there's something about you almost gives me hopes of you."

Tom laughed, seized Mother Lide around the waist and danced her across the room, snatched his cap and calling "Good-bye, Kathie," dashed out the door.

He was going to make a great day of this and sell more papers than he ever had before to buy the needles and yarn for Kathie. "John beats all for getting up things," he thought. "He don't say nothin', just sits around and thinks, and if you get him limbered up any, his talk's just no end interest-

ing; no more like any of the rest of the boys than nothing in this world. They all like him, too."

He had to begin his day as usual by getting his breakfast at the eating-place he and a crowd of other newsboys patronized.

"Whew, aint he a dude!"

"When'd you git your shirt washed, Tommie?"

"Where's that black rope gone you been wearing round your neck?"

"Clear the way for the white elephant."

Tom was considered a master hand at chaffing, and his answers elicited shouts of laughter. One after another finished such breakfasts as they could afford, and Tom went off with some of his especial cronies.

"Here, Tom, you're such a swell this morning I'll give you this," said a boy called Fatty, and he handed out to Tom a cigar stump he had found and treasured—an unusually fat, long one.

"And here's a light," said another boy.

Tom sucked and puffed and blew away with a fine assumption of airs and graces. He always had since he could remember.

"I can't smoke no stumps outer the gutter," said another boy, "it just makes me sick every time. I've shut my eyes and it's just the same."

"Pshaw," said Fatty, "even when you buy 'em new right out the store, they're made out of just such stumps, nastier, dirtier ones, too—soaked right in gutter water."

Fatty was n't the only one who knew that.

Tom felt a shiver run through him. "'Clean, sweet, wholesome.'" "Oh, *are* You sick of me? I 'll never do it again," was the lightning-like thought. "There, I 've swore off. Here, Fatty, if you want it. Never going to smoke one of 'em again."

The boys thought it was part of Tom's style, and they cheered him enthusiastically.

"Fact," said Tom soberly, "I 've got a new Friend that do n't like any such dirty ways, so I 've swore off. Cracky, if there aint Dan just a sprintin' off with his papers."

The boys made a simultaneous rush, and the work of the morning began.

Whether it was Tom's clean clothes or his extra determination, or what, he did n't know, but he never had had a better run on papers.

All the editions through the day sold well, so that when he went back to the tenement at night he could spare what he thought would be enough for John to get the needles and some yarn for Kathie to learn to knit on. Evidently John must be the one to lay out the money for that, for the German woman would tell him what to buy.

"Say, John, did you see her, the old Dutchy?"

"Yes, Frau Kraf, she says call her, or something like that. I had the baby this morning and Frau Kraf said when we got the needles she would sit up

with Kathie and teach her if she learned easy and it did n't take too much time. She said, 'Die kleine Mädchens nicht knit so gut like unser deutsche Mädchens. Ganz bad böse. Ich vill do some gut.' Kathie 's just crazy about it."

"Just looka here! Now you can buy them right away to-morrow. And I 'm going to get some more, too. I 'm going right over to Ryan's and I 'm going to play this thing," patting his mouth-organ, "so 'st Ryan will call me in, and I won't play for beers, neither; it 's going to be money."

John shrugged his shoulders. He did n't like Ryan's, but he was glad Tom would get some more money.

After Tom had played snatches of some of the most popular street airs, Ryan himself appeared at the door, a stout, red-faced man in an apron that had once been white. He was going to put on his clean one later. Then the band was coming, and hilarity would run high.

"Here, Tom, come in and play a while till the band tunes up. I 'll give you all the beer you want."

"I 'll come in and play, but I rather have money."

"You 're too particular. Well, mebbe I 'll give you a nickel or a dime if you draw."

Ryan's was the most popular saloon for the court, and he wanted to keep it so. He had a good bar and fine lights, and in winter kept a warm, brilliantly lighted, lively place, where all that could loved to

congregate. In summer it was a larger place and better ventilated than any other, and the music and other entertainments drew an equally large crowd. There were not many in the saloon, as most of the families were still at their suppers or lounging out in the street.

Tom played his liveliest airs. The men praised him, and before he had played long a crowd of boys had gathered around the door, and the habitués were filing in. Tom did not play all the time, but whether he played or rested he watched the familiar faces. They had acquired a new interest. Mr. Mulhaley sat in his regular place with a mug of something beside him. Summer and winter he always sat there and grew more or less stupid until he was dutifully escorted home by his son. But the younger Mulhaley, rumor was having it, was beginning to drink to the drunken stage himself, and he could not stand it as his father did. It made him noisy and irritable. Tom had a vague feeling of pity for the younger man as he stood there, a fine, tall, strong fellow, with a particularly kind face. His wife, Molly Mulhaley, was the prettiest young woman in the tenement, and all the women had said she "did fine" to get Joe Mulhaley, for he was the man to make the best husband in the whole ward. But now they shook their heads, and said, "Joe was like to be as bad or worse than the rest."

Then there was all the tough set of young men,

the fighters, and brawlers, and lawbreakers, the set that had taken the place of the set Mother Lide's Billy got in with. They made trouble, and Ryan always had to be watching them, but they were good customers. Then there was the general run of men in the tenement, who spent a rather large proportion of all they earned at Ryan's, paying regularly, though other bills did not always fare so well. And there were some women and as many small boys as could be allowed in. Tom knew them all, but things looked strangely different to him.

There was Heidigger—and his little girl was so sick everybody knew she would die. Tom thought indignantly that Heidigger might have taken the dime he pulled out so pat for his beer to buy some oranges or ice-cream for the girl, for everybody knew she was burning up with fever. And there was Stokes, whose wife had a little new baby, and Tom felt mad to see him standing there drinking. For Stokes was out of work and everybody knew it.

The band had not begun yet, and already Joe Mulhaley's voice was getting louder. Tom knew the signs; he was in for a regular break-out. Molly Mulhaley must have known some other signs, too, for Tom suddenly saw her face at the door,—such a pretty, anxious face as it stared in at Joe, seeing nothing else, though his flushed, excited head did not turn toward her.

Tom's rising wrath reached its culmination. He

had seen these things ever since he had come to that tenement; now they looked so different. He felt all through him how they must look to that other Boy who came to earth to help people away from just such things, away from their worst selves. He knew how those confident, loving eyes would darken with pity at such sorry sights.

"And you 'll have none of it, too, Tom Hart!" Tom apostrophised himself, jamming his mouth-organ into his pocket with unnecessary force. "And you here playing your old mouth-organ to get 'em to come in! A pretty friend you are! I 'll show you a thing or two! And, Joe Mulhaley, you 're coming out now, or I 'll know the reason why!"

Like a flash he was at Joe's side, and, seizing him by both wrists, and fixing his eyes with a steady glance on Joe's, he said, in a low, excited voice, though no one else noticed him:

"Joe Mulhaley, you 're coming right now with me this minute. Do n't say a word; Molly wants you, do you understand? *Molly* wants you."

Joe was astonished enough, but Tom's manner quieted him, and he went.

"Here, Molly," said Tom, "here 's Joe."

"God bless you, Tom!" Molly's voice trembled, and she held desperately to Joe's arm. "O Joe, I 'm so frightened! You won't leave me again, will you, Joe?"

"Poor Molly!" Joe said, in a tone more like him-

self. "I 'll be all right when I get some water, Molly."

"Well, I 'll never go in there again—not for foolishness, anyway," vowed Tom, as he followed along after them.

CHAPTER IV

A PICNIC

"He said you had to have sand, too, did he?"

"Yes, and black dirt."

Tom and John were walking rapidly, dragging a box wagon and an old fire-shovel after them. They were going to a street where men were digging down for the foundations of a new row of dwellings. John had gone to his hothouse, as he called it, and had waited until he saw the man who had been so kind to him before.

"Please," said John, his earnest face quite aglow, "please, I've got fifteen cents, and I want to get some things, and I don't know what; and if you *would* tell me, and tell me about dirt, and all, I'd pay you the fifteen cents for the things, and work, anything you wanted me to, for what you told me." To say so much wasn't in the least like John, and he was quite breathless.

"Losh, laddie, but you're a talker!" said the man. "Come, now, and I'll show you. What will you be doing with what you get?"

"Kathie—she's a lame little girl"— John was determined not to have his scheme fall through for lack of a tongue,—"she's going to have some plants,

and we 're going to sell 'em to the tenement children for her, and so we want things that won't die easy, and have nice, pretty flowers. And we've got a lot of little cans and things, and you said you could get a lot of seeds for five cents; so we want to get seeds, 'cause we 'd only get three plants for fifteen cents. Do you know now?"

"I know, I know," nodded the man.

John thought his red face and red hair beautiful, and that his smile was a guerdon of success.

"Now, then, laddie, we 'll be walkin' in. You and I 'll see what we can do; but I 'll be looking at your fifteen cents first."

John promptly handed over the fifteen cents, and they went into a house similar to the one he had been in before.

"Now, then, I 'll give ye the full benefit o' my opinion. I 'm thinking if you raise some from the seed for children to keep you 'll be doin' well to have some mignonette; a little pot of it will make a whole room sweet, and many a sick body has been comfortit with a bit pot of mignonette. And I 'm thinkin' some sweet alyssum will be another favorite, a free bloomer, and a sweet, pure bit of a flower. I 'm aye fond of a bit of sweet alyssum. Then, if you 'll mind what I 'll tell you, you can raise some sweet violets, and some bits of pansies; they 're braw sellers. Are you thinkin' with me?"

"I just am!"

"Then there's geraniums. Now I'll fix you up with a many little slips an' you'll plant them and root them yoursel'. Tak tent now whilst I tell you."

The result of it all was that John had started off as happy as any boy in the city—more a real boy than he had ever been before—with his seeds in exactly the right shape, and his wet slips in a pasteboard box, and his head full of instructions as to earth, light, air, and water.

Since Tom had told him what the Roslyns had said, John had felt as though life was quite another matter. New things had opened up for him, too; not as for Tom, but in a way that suited his needs. The loneliness had dropped away from him. He was as sure that Some One cared for him, and loved him, and was with him as it was possible to feel. It was worth everything to John. He had never been able to fit into his surroundings, and now there seemed to have come near to him a presence capable of bringing peace and a quiet happiness, driving out that hurt, aching feeling always present with him, that had stamped itself on his lonesome little face.

As soon as possible Tom and John started to get the earth. Jim's box cart had been beneficently loaned for the occasion, Tom having promised to teach Jim an undercut in return. To get that cart full of earth and sand and fill up all the little cans and jars they had gathered was the important feature just then.

"They 'll send us off when we begin to get any earth."

"Let 'em send!" was Tom's contemptuous answer.

"They 'll put the police on us."

"Shucks!"

But, fearful of some untoward end to their undertaking, Tom marched boldly up to the policeman nearest the lots.

"Say, mister," making his very best bow, "we want to get some dirt where they're digging for to plant some flowers in. Won't that be all right? You won't send us off, will you? That 's all we want."

"Oh, if you do n't sass anybody I guess you 'll get away with it all right," grinned the policeman.

Cheered by that form of consent they went to work with their fire-shovel until they had two thirds of a load of fair-looking black soil.

The next thing was to go to a place where they were laying a brick walk and get some sand. That was quite a different matter. Tom had never seen a case yet where a boy taking sand got off unchallenged.

"We 'll just try it. I 'll ask the boss."

When they reached the place they stood and watched the brick laying. The foreman eyed them and their cart sharply.

"See here, now, you boys need n't begin nigging that sand! Now understand that!"

"Oh, say," began Tom, "we do n't want to nig

your sand, but you just let me fill your pail full of good, cold, fresh water up at the fountain. I 'll do it if you 'll give me enough sand to fill up this here wagon; it won't take much. We 're going to plant flowers."

The water pail had only a small amount of warm, dusty water in it, and the foreman agreed very readily to the bargain.

"I 'll help fetch it," said John, "if we can leave the wagon."

"Oh, your wagon will be all right," volunteered one of the men.

So in the course of time two very hot boys marched triumphantly into the court dragging a full load of earth. Well knowing the ordeal that awaited them, they picked up the box cart bodily, and made a dash up-stairs, a successful one as it proved, and landed their cart of earth in their own room before Kathie's happy eyes.

Kathie, full of joyful anticipation, her knitting-needles picking a careful way in and out of some blue yarn, had been chattering ceaselessly to Frau Kraf, while fat, white-haired Hans pounded the floor with a spoon.

Frau Kraf had assiduously taught Kathie, and had sat with her every day since she began to learn. The higher room with its fairer outlook was soothing to the old woman, who had quite a horror of the tenement. Just as soon as her son could manage it they

were going to have a little place outside the city with a little garden, and that would be living indeed. It was a queer compound which she spoke, and much of it was Greek to Kathie; but how she enjoyed it all! The little house and its little garden was a beautiful reality to her, and she in turn talked quite as rapidly of the flowers she was to raise in the three windows on the clumsy rows of shelves the boys had already put up.

The boys mixed up the soil and filled the cans, and Kathie, anxiously, and with little shrieks of excitement, planted the seeds. She planted the slips, too, under John's dignified tutorship.

When all the seeds were planted and all the slips set, the boys placed the little cans on the higher shelves, and Kathie placed the cans with the slips in them on the lower shelves. Then Tom with scarcely suppressed pride, said, "Now wait a minute and see what you see!"

He went into the other little room and came out with a worn, stubby paint-brush and a little old paint-keg. Then, with a flourish, while John looked on with a pleased smile, and Kathie's eyes grew rounder than ever, he dabbed some nice little splashes of greenish paint on all the pots. He contrived to make it cover most of them, and the gala appearance of the windows was much enhanced.

"O boys, it is prettier than the story, and I thought nobody ever had such pretty things as the story."

"Pshaw!" said Tom. "We can have things twice as pretty as that story! Why, John and I will bring up the finest pictures you ever saw for the wall; pretty ones, none of your comics."

"I've thought of some things; Kathie and I can make them," said John quietly, "when I can get the things and have time."

Tom laughed. "You're kept busier than you used to be, John. You're more open-like and don't act so scared off."

"You give me the lift-up, Tom," and John flushed slightly.

"Makes a difference to know who's who, don't it, John?"

Kathie was following the conversation eagerly. "He helps me, too," she put in, "just like your lame lady said, Tom. I do just what little Emily did in the story."

"That's good news, Kathie. I knew something made you mighty bright and cheerful, but I thought it was Frau Kraf, and the knitting, and the seeds, and all."

"Oh, it's everything, I guess."

Tom did not quite see through it all, but he shrugged his shoulders and whistled away contentedly when he thought of it. "It's all right for other people to be helped along by You any way they can, but I'm gladder than I can say that you keep with me the way you are," he thought, reverently and very lovingly.

He could not help noticing sometimes, himself, how differently he looked at things, simply because he had come to think instantly how his Friend would look at things. He and John were sitting on the tenement-house steps one afternoon. Tom was resting, after a scrap with Jim. The court and street, as usual, swarmed with children. They were playing, and having a good time in their way, but it was a very impeded way. There was n't much room. Teams and wagons broke up every game almost as soon as it was begun, and it was a common occurrence for an excited mother or older child to rush out among the horses to rescue some inexperienced wanderer. Some of the children sat listlessly around, overcome by the heat, but more kept up a constant running and scrambling.

There was Jenny. She was so pale and little. Dick Madden lay stretched out on the pavement, stirring uneasily, and three of the Corrigan children were crying at once; and Sally was minding a very cross baby, and looking wistfully at a group of girls playing jacks. They ought to have more room. Tom did not think of anything better than the bare, trodden, narrow playground attached to the school where he used to go. He did not know much about playgrounds, but he felt that would be better. And there was the little park; that was n't so bad. Part of the grass the police let you go on, though it was generally covered with men lying down. But there

were the walks and the pond with fish in it, and the other pond with the bridge and the boat. None of the children, he had noticed particularly, could go there alone, except Sally, and she never could get the baby there.

"Say, John," said Tom, in an excited voice, "I'll just make Jim fetch his box wagon, and let's take these little tots to the little park; they can walk it all well enough; and we'll put the baby in the wagon."

"Mebbe they'd let me take Hans," said John. "That's an awful strong baby-wagon they've got. It would hold Kathie, easy."

"Bully for you!" and Tom slapped John enthusiastically on the back. "You go see, and I'll manage Jim."

Frau Kraf would not let Hans go in such a crowd, but her kindly old German face lighted up as it occurred to her that Kathie might ride in the wagon. So the stout old concern was taken down-stairs, and then Tom and John made a chair of their hands, and carried the ecstatic Kathie down. Her reddish curls fairly bobbed with excitement, and her blue eyes danced.

Jim had agreed to go, and Sally's baby was sitting contentedly in the box wagon, while Sally was maturely pulling down and straightening out the three little Corrigans.

"They can just take their bit supper with 'em;

they 'll be afther getting hungry," said Mrs. Corrigan, and she handed them a bag of bread and cheese, with many injunctions to the oldest not to eat it all up himself. Jenny's mother bestowed on her a slab of dry gingerbread, and Dick Madden, after a search in his quarters, brought down a bag containing some suspicious-looking apples, and one cracker. Sally had her baby's bottle, and a piece of bread for herself.

"It 'll be a regular jamboree picnic," shouted Jim, and he raced off to his mother. Jim's people were known as the most extravagant livers in the tenement. So when Jim came back, bragging that he had some lobster, and some pickles, and some bread and molasses, he was gazed upon with a sigh of admiring envy.

Kathie began to look somewhat crestfallen, and John was in some doubt, himself.

"Do n't you mind, Kathie," said Tom, in his masterful way. "Soon as I 've got you all out there, I 'll have to go back and sell the next edition, but I 'll slick it through all right, or sell out to some other feller, and I 'll bring some things for us."

Kathie's eyes lost their faint shadow, and the excited little party started on its way. They picked out a good place in the park, and Tom, binding them all by a solemn oath not to eat until his return, dashed off for business.

The best success attended him, and when he

returned, it was with enough stale buns for their three, and with several very good pieces of chicken, and some fried veal.

"Why, Tom!" cried Sally. "How could you get such good things?"

"By knowin' how. I went down to our restaurant, where I know one of the waiters, an awful good fellow, and he fetched me out some left-overs, cheap. They 're all right, too. Now, everybody sit down; we 're going to eat. Now, no hurryin'! Say now, Jim, you eat your lobster and bread and molasses, and you give me your two pickles, and I 'll give you a piece of veal, and I 'll cut the pickles so everybody can have some."

Jim agreed, having conceived a great desire for some of Tom's veal. Then Tom cut the pickles into little pieces, and each child received a piece with the loudest expressions of satisfaction. Tom took his other piece of veal and cut that into the tiniest fragments, and everybody received a piece of that. As Sally had nothing but bread, he gave her a piece of chicken. He gave Jenny a bun and divided up her gingerbread and Dick's apples between the two. And finally, tolerably well satisfied with the equality of the meal and the contented faces of the participants, he permitted them to begin eating.

They buzzed and champed and laughed, and had a time of such hilarious enjoyment that a good many of the loungers on the free grass turned to gaze with



"A REGULAR JAMBOREE PICNIC."

a sympathetic wistfulness. Kathie was sure she had never eaten anything so good as her bun and chicken, and Sally was equally contented.

When not a crumb remained they still had time to wander around the two ponds, no tongue silent a minute, before they went back to the tenement, having had an experience that would serve as a subject of conversation for many a day.

CHAPTER V

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE

Tom did not think he had been asleep half a minute when he felt Mother Lide shaking him and heard her quavering voice saying: "Oh, Tommie dear, and won't you be after going down to the dispensary for the doctor? Kathie's ailin' so bad I can't stand it any longer!"

Tom tumbled out. He never had much to put either on or off, and away he went with a parting, "I'll hurry like lightning. Don't worry; she'll be all right!"

He knew it was very late, for there were no stragglers. All seemed to be quiet as he hurried down the stairway. A woman's scream sounded from one of the lower rooms.

"Finnigan's in from Ryan's," thought Tom vindictively, as he hurried past. The street was strange in its unwonted quiet—a quiet that induced Tom to look upward at the narrow strip of deep sky between the high housetops. It flashed across him that in his street he had never looked up there before. A happy thrill went through him as he thought that it was because of his Friend that it could mean something to him. Ryan's saloon was still brilliantly

lighted, and from the sounds Tom thought the night's doings must be at the climax.

"It isn't right," he muttered, clinching his little brown fists as he darted past. He was nearly at the dispensary and ran faster still. Dr. Gray might be out, but he hoped not. He had had to go for Dr. Gray before. Dr. Gray was a woman he liked. He had always felt responsive to the steady, kindly glance she had given him when she had seen him. He liked the sound of her voice. He liked her whole-souled way of taking care of people.

Breathless, he rang the dispensary bell. Some one called down the tube and asked what he wanted. He told, and added, "Tell her Mother Lide sent, and she don't send for nothing."

Yes, Dr. Gray would be right over, and Tom, still panting, started slowly for home. He went home by a different way, past the great, silent warehouse.

It was well lighted on one side by the street lights, and the night watchman was sedately pacing his rounds. Tom liked it. He had a dim feeling that this stillness of the world, this quiet of the night, was a sort of homage to the Maker, and yet that the Ruler of it all was glad to be a little boy with him, knowing all things and powerful in all, but nevertheless a little, quiet, happy boy, with pure eyes and a most loving heart. The warm, chivalrous, reverential spirit in Tom's small body swelled at the thought.

He reached the darkest part of the warehouse wall

where there was a deep embrasure. Far down at the other end, but plainly seen by the light, was the watchman.

Two men moved cautiously out of the embrasure.

Tom saw at a glance what the men had, and what they had been doing. His impulse was to shout for the watchman. But the men took in the situation as quickly as he did. By a desperate but clever movement one of the men stifled Tom just as he had opened his mouth. Like a flash he was turned over, his mouth gagged, and he was being carried swiftly along—ever so far it seemed to him—and by a winding way. The men went down some steps, at last, and he was unceremoniously stood up and ungagged.

He was in a small room lit by two lanterns and lumbered up with a little of everything.

The men looked silently at Tom and he grinned back. He could n't help it.

"Well, I never! What 's your name?"

The man who spoke was a young, slim fellow with reddish hair and blue eyes that looked to Tom like old friends. The other man was somewhat older and heavier, and wore a short beard.

"Tom Hart. What 's yours?"

"Answer what 's spoke to you!" put in the other man. "How old are you?"

"Twelve."

"What were you going to call out for, you imp?"

"It looked as though the watchman ought to know."

"None of your business, sure."

Tom wasn't sure that it was just at that minute.

"I'm glad you didn't get caught," turning to the younger man.

"Well, you 're a nice little cove."

"Come, Reddy," said the older man; "tie him up and come on. If you 're tied up in here you 'll know what it feels like, and won't be so fly next time. Tie him tighter!"

"Tie him yourself, Brown, if you know so much about it. No use hurting a little rat like him, though."

Brown took some cloth and bits of rope and tied Tom so that he sat on something that felt like a roll of cloth. The man gave two or three rather vicious twists as he tied.

"Oh, come!" protested Reddy.

"He ought to be made to feel it," muttered Brown. "Look where we are, now!"

After he was satisfied with his knots, they went out, leaving Tom in the blackest darkness he had ever experienced.

"Here 's a pretty go," he chuckled, and twisting himself into as comfortable a position as possible, he was asleep in less than five minutes.

The next thing he knew some one was prodding him in no very gentle fashion, and he opened his eyes to find light enough to see by coming in through one little ground glass window light, up near

the ceiling. A woman at least as old as Mother Lide, but of a larger, sparer type, was berating him indignantly.

"A pretty catch! A bit of a boy! I won't have it! He thinks to ride over me willy-nilly. No swag, no nothin'. I say, wake up!"

"All right, I 'm awake," said Tom good-naturedly.

"How 'd you get here?"

"Brown and Reddy fetched me," promptly.

"More work for me and no pay! A *boy!* What did they bring you here for?"

"I 'd like to know myself. Why do n't you undo me and let me out?"

"That 's what I will," angrily. "Why can't they take advice? Nothing goes through since he 's got to going on his own hook."

"Is Brown your son?" hazarded Tom.

"Certain, worse luck to him! What you asking questions for? Where 'd they go?"

"Give it up."

The woman was untying him about as ungently as her son had tied him up.

"This will raise a pretty row," she went on, mostly to herself. "I do n't care; it will show them I rule this concern yet. Here, get you gone now," pushing him through the door into a dark box of an entry and then up a low flight of stairs to a lighted hall, and out of an outside door right onto the sidewalk.

It was evidently very early. He stood there a

moment winking and stretching, and wondering where he was, when around the corner dashed two men right to Tom's side, and, as one opened the door, the other, with a growl of recognition, knocked Tom into the doorway so that he fell sideways into the hall. The door was slammed shut, Tom was hustled back down the same stairs he had just been hustled up, and shoved again into the door of the room where he had spent the night. The old woman was in there.

"What now?" she cried.

"Matter enough," growled Brown, though he was shaking with excitement. "They're after us. They're tracking us here, too," with a savage glance at Reddy. "What did you let that brat out for? If he had been standing out there now, our game would be up."

Reddy, Tom observed, was deftly going around the room and taking various small things he wanted. Some he put inside his shirt, some things that seemed to be bills or other money he slipped into the lining of his belt. Brown began to make similar preparations, but he seemed nervously uncertain, started at every sound, and finally cried out that they must go.

"I'll kill that boy first, though," he cried, and pulled out a knife. The man looked dangerous; evidently his mother and Reddy half believed him, for they darted at him.

After the first hot throb of terror Tom felt curiously unconcerned. "I won't shame You. I 'll be brave like You 'd be," he was half unconsciously saying to his unseen Friend.

"You 're crazy," said Brown's mother. "Do you want to hang?"

"We 'll take him right along with us, Brown," said Reddy soothingly, "then he can't break. Come on, let 's make a dash for it."

Brown was so evidently all but uncontrollable that the risk of leaving the room seemed as nothing to letting him remain in it.

The old woman went first. Brown followed, and Reddy kept tight hold of Tom.

"You 're in for it," he whispered. "Just keep right along with me without squealing, and you 'll get out all right."

Tom had no disposition to resist, and no ability to, as Reddy's grip was no light matter. Up the stairs they went, clear to the housetop, up the ladder through the trap, and out onto the roof, and then swiftly along that roof, and three more like it; then a ten-foot drop, and after several roofs more a climb up loosened bricks, apparently a well-known place.

Once Reddy cautiously looked over the parapet into the street below but drew back suddenly. He thought there was something unusual in the crowd he saw gathered at that hour.

Then came the place where evidently they had been used to descending. A piece of rope coiled around a chimney let them down to a fire-escape, and down they went; then a drop to the roof of an outbuilding into a yard, over a fence, and into an alley.

Tom was agile enough and about as daring as a boy could be, but he thought he must have been in a dozen different pieces by the time he reached the alley. If Reddy had not helped him once, he was sure he would have fallen, and he looked up gratefully at the tense young face beside him.

Reddy smiled slightly. "You've got sand," he whispered. "Keep your nerve; Brown's so near crazy he'll sure get us into a scrape."

"Stop jawing," said Brown fiercely, turning around. "Now it's for Jay's and then the open," and he went swiftly on.

Brown's actions seemed particularly foolish to Tom, for any one could see he was trying to escape from something. Reddy shrugged his shoulders and hurried after. The streets were still quiet and they gained the desired place without notice. Down into a basement room they went, where an old man was just bestirring himself for the day.

"Broke!" blurted out Brown. Something of his fear left him down there. "Drink! quick!" he said to the man, who at once handed him a black bottle such as Tom had been accustomed to look at as the very coat of arms of toughdom.

Brown took a deep draught and Reddy was evidently expecting his turn.

"Don't," whispered Tom; "it's that ails him now—the fool!"

After a second's irresolution Reddy decided as Tom wished, while Brown, saying, "More for me," drank again. Then he was straightway quite blustering, and described something of the difficulty they were in, though in such language that Tom could understand very little of it. Then he proceeded to change his clothes for those of a ditch digger. Reddy made similar changes, each took an old shovel, and, deciding that Tom was all right as he was, they started out again.

By the time houses and people looked fairly wide awake and ready for the business of the day, they were in a distinctly suburban part of the city. Milk-wagons, truck-wagons, loads of all sorts of things destined for the use of the city dwellers, rumbled monotonously citywards. The road became a mere country road, the houses farmhouses, and, when Tom was feeling footsore and particularly empty, Brown called a halt by a large oak-tree. The red roof of a comfortable farmhouse showed at no great distance, and the large barns were nearly opposite them.

"You, bub, you," and Brown made a sweep through the air with his shovel at Tom, "you go up to that house and beg a breakfast for all three of us, do you hear?"



"YOU MOVE NOW, WILL YOU?"

"I won't do it," flamed out Tom. Begging never had been in his line and he was n't going to begin now.

"Confound you!" Brown made an angry thrust with the shovel with the intention of hitting him, but Tom dodged.

"You move now, will you?"

"No."

Brown seemed to get a new idea.

"I 'm not going to carry that shovel any further, that 's certain," and he flung it into a clump of bushes over the fence.

"Now, Reddy, you watch that boy. No gettin' away. Remember, I mean what I say." The look he gave Reddy was a sufficient endorsement of his words. Then he slumped off toward the farmhouse.

"Say, Reddy, come on and let 's leave him," urged Tom.

Reddy looked at him curiously.

"There 's got to be lots taken out of you yet, Tom." There was something almost pitying in his voice. "I've tried to leave him, but I did n't dare, and that 's the fact. He 'd kill me next time he saw me, and that next time would come mighty quick, too. I used to think he was a great man."

"He 's a coward! He 's a bully! He 's as bad as he can be, and he would n't dare a thing except where he had the upper hand!"

Reddy shrugged his shoulders.

"Not denyin' it, pardner, but he 'll dare a heap when he has the upper hand, and that 's what he 's got of us ! "

"I 'm goin' now."

" No you 're not ! " and Reddy promptly had him in a grip that was no childish matter. "You might as well stop that first as last. I 've nothin' against you, and so far as I can come between you and Brown, I will. But he 's determined to have you stay with us, and stay you shall. *I 'm* not going to let you go, and the sooner you bow down to it, the easier for both of us."

" Well, I wish 't you had more grit, though. We could do him as neat as a pin."

" I know him, sonny," was the brief reply.

Brown came back in a very good humor. He had half a cold pork pie, some corn bread, and an apple pie. It looked delicious beyond description to Tom.

" Pitch in, Reddy. You, bub, you set there and watch us eat. Do n't you move."

Reddy undertook to hand Tom a piece of corn bread.

" No you do n't," said Brown. " He can set and watch like I told him."

It was hard watching. Tom felt as though his boy Friend were looking at him with sorrowful, sympathetic eyes, grieved that he was so hungry.

" Pshaw, taint nothin' ; do n't You mind," Tom

found himself saying inwardly. "I ain't much hungry; do n't you be worryin' yourself about me."

When the meal was finished, there was still some food left and Brown wrapped it up and tied it to his belt. Then he lay down. He was evidently very much used up. If he had been temporarily invigorated by his liquor it was now overcoming him. Reddy, much slighter and less strong, was able to go on and was keenly aware of the necessity of their doing so. He had objected to their stopping for more than necessary rest in the first place. But Brown was unable to proceed. With purpling face he lay there breathing heavily, and was immediately in a heavy, stupid sleep.

"Now won't you go?" pleaded Tom.

"It 's risky staying," said Reddy, "but I 'm not going to leave him here to be nabbed alone."

"I believe you 're just luny."

Reddy laughed. "See here, Tom, if you 'll give me your word of honor to come right back here to me, no faking, I 'll let you go and get you something to eat any way you like."

"All right!" was the answer given with surprising alacrity.

He went through the fence, took Brown's discarded shovel, and kept along inside the fence until he came to a stile. Standing on that he could see a boy, not very far off, hoeing. He walked toward the boy. "Hello."

"Hello," returned the boy, stopping his hoeing.

"Say, don't you want this shovel?"

The lad was one of those boys who are always itching to make things; every bit of iron or wire or string held marvelous possibilities. He eyed the shovel with favor. If he could have a shovel to do as he pleased with he certainly would not dig. He would make something with it.

"Yep."

"I'll give it to you if you can give me something to eat for it—something real filling."

The boy looked at him suspiciously. "No use going to our house for something to eat. Mother's mad as a hornet. A tramp stopped there a little while ago and she gave him some corn bread, and he stole a pork pie we were going to have for dinner and an apple pie. No use."

"I'm sorry," said Tom, holding onto his shovel. "If you'd get me something I'd give you the shovel, but if you can't, I'll have to try to trade it somewhere else. Where's the next house?"

The boy's face brightened. "If you'll wait right here I'll go to the next house. It's my aunt's, and I guess I can get you something. You could n't sell her the shovel, sure, but I guess I can get the stuff."

"Will it take long?"

"Not very; I'll hurry."

"All right. I'll wait just as long as I can."

Tom was beginning to think his empty little

stomach would be the death of him when the boy appeared, hot and pleased.

"Gimme the shovel. Sit down here and eat, can't you? It's good!"

And it was good. Tom had suffered from hunger before and had learned that it was necessary to begin very slowly when nearly famished. He did his best now but he would have preferred to have bolted it all at once.

"Here, I'll give you a drink out of my bottle. It's oatmeal water. My aunt, she fixes me a bottle every day when they make me hoe, or do things."

Tom took a drink and he was as grateful a boy as there was in that neighborhood. It was a relief to him to feel that his boy friend Jesus did not have to bear a vicarious burden of hunger any longer.

"What's your name?" he asked, scarcely taking his eyes from the spread before him.

"Jed. What's yours?"

"Tom. Say, this is boss. If ever I get a chance I'll come and thank you later. What's your last name?"

"Cooper. Is it good?"

"*Is* it!"

Tom could n't talk much. Corn bread and fried bacon, and two fried eggs, and a great slab of cherry pie—such doings! He wished for John and Kathie.

"I *never* had such good eating! Wish 't I had a

gold watch to give you, 'stead of that old shovel. Got to go now."

"Here; you can have another drink. I'll go get some more for me. You was hungry, was n't you?"

"Rather! Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

Reddy was looking anxiously for him.

"Thought you 'd given me the slip. Get anything?"

"I did. Beat yours all holler, and yours was stolen, too."

"Was it?" looking uneasily at the sleeper.

"Yep, and they 're awful mad, too!"

Reddy frowned. "Must want to get us into a scrape, I should think! The fool! We 've got to start."

Tom was hoping he meant to start without Brown but that was not the case. Reddy went to the horse-trough that stood a little way up the road and finally got enough water to arouse Brown. It was hard work and he was only half awake and very savage when he at last stumbled on. They were only intending to walk a short distance to a railroad station and Tom found the walk quite comfortable after his breakfast.

After half an hour's wait at the station, time spent by Reddy in trying to keep Brown from being arrested for making a disturbance, they took their train, and from a remark let fall by Reddy, Tom believed they would be in the city they were bound for by night.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSPLANTED

Tom had passed for a very knowing boy among his friends, and had always considered himself such, but his recent experiences began to make him feel like a mere novice. On the train Brown went at once into a log-like sleep. Reddy was desperately tired. If he could have been sure he could wake up at every station, or that Tom would not leave, he would have gone to sleep, too. Tom was sleepy but he had a sort of pride about not giving up before Reddy.

"Why don't you go to sleep, Reddy?"

"Why don't you?"

"Oh, I don't need to—right off. But you can hardly keep awake."

"I'd go in a minute if you would promise to stay right where you are."

Tom felt half sorry for Reddy, and he was tired enough to think with great pleasure of staying quietly precisely where he was. And, after all, now that he was well away from his familiar haunts it felt good to stay with Reddy.

"I'll promise that far. You can go to sleep for all me."

And Reddy slept. Tom watched him closely. The boyish, rather handsome face, the features pinched sharply out with weariness, the wide, firm mouth, innocent of beard, the reddish hair slanting across the smooth white brow, the long lashes slightly darker than the hair—the whole aspect was so familiar.

As Tom watched the face, a dawning suspicion grew to be a conviction.

"It's Kathie all over," he thought, "when she's tired that way. And like Mother Lide some about the forehead and top of the nose. Same eyes, too, when they're open. Knew I'd seen him, first lick! O Billy, I know you! And it's me and Mother Lide, and Kathie, and—and You"— reverently, "against that beast of a Brown! Yes, I'll stay right along with you till the fight's over, Billy."

He had held out the longest, though his recognition of the fact that he had had a night's sleep and they had not, prevented overmuch conceit, and his pride finally allowed him to drop off to sleep.

Every sleep he had seemed to be terminated by a shaking, lately. He woke up to hear the conductor shouting at him:

"Get out of here! This is no sleeping-car! Everybody off, here. Wake up, wake up, I say!"

Tom and Reddy were able to respond, but it was more trouble to arouse Brown. When they were actually off the train, the conductor heaved a sigh of

relief, and confided to the brakeman, "There is a bad lot for you."

Once off the train, in the station, with its thousand different grades of noises, its bells, and whistles, and shouts, and trucks, and bumps, and gongs, and valves, and clatter of dishes, Brown again took a determined lead. This city was no new place to him. Rapidly, in and out of fine, handsome streets and dark, crooked ones, he threaded an unhesitating way, and finally, in one of the most ill-favored of them all, he took them to a place that looked as though it might be a cross between a lodging-house and a saloon, except that it had no sign of any sort. Brown was well known there; some greeted him effusively, some looked none too well pleased, but, with few exceptions, those gathered in the sawdust-floored drinking-room seemed to know him. There was not much of a bar, simply tables and benches and stools. The room was hot, and filled with smoke and liquor-fumes, although the door and windows were wide open.

"They don't all like him," thought Tom, with satisfaction.

He wanted to get away, but there seemed to be no way to do it. Either Brown or Reddy had kept hold of him ever since they left the train.

"You don't like it, do You?" thought Tom sadly. "I'd go if I could—you know that, don't you? But you will help me, won't you, about Reddy?"

Then he had that same comforted feeling again. Never mind, he had his Friend right with him, to stand by him, no matter what happened, and ready to help him in every sort of true, honest, faithful way. It was worth everything in the world. Let what would come, he could go right on with whatever came to his share; glad to live and act with such a friend. He straightened up, unconsciously—held his head better, and was ready to meet life half way.

"Why, you're mettling up some, Tom! What's got into you? Brown will let you eat, to-night, I guess."

"I hope so," smiled Tom, with a backward, grateful thought toward his cherry pie.

They did eat, and Tom was permitted to have a sufficient portion. Brown found that Tom was the subject of a good many questions and remarks. More than one man said: "He'll do. Right stuff. Sharp boy," and so on. Most of the talk, however, was outside of Tom's understanding. A little here and there he could pick up—enough, before the evening was over, to let him know beyond a doubt that these men were practised lawbreakers, *bona fide* burglars and safe-blowers; any and all of them men who had served a sentence, or ought to have done so; most of them were men wanted by the police. It was interesting enough.

Tom watched Reddy's flushed, keen face, intelli-

gent eyes, wide awake to everything. Tom could not decide how far Reddy had ever been implicated with men as far advanced in their trade as these men were. He became tolerably certain that Brown was an old hand, but that Reddy had seen nothing of service except under Brown's tutelage. And he felt sure that Reddy was listening with feverish eagerness to these men, to hear how they had succeeded, and what had been their adventures. The character of the interest Tom had taken in what he heard changed. He listened still more intently, but listened as though through Reddy's ears. How would that strike him? Would he believe that? Was he in too deep to back out? How badly was he bitten? When Brown got into a dispute with another man, Tom was glad. When the general sociability of the evening turned to a general free-all-around quarrel in words, with threats of worse, Tom was glad. But when he saw Reddy entering into the spirit of the dispute, as he had into the more amiable conversation, he felt heart-sick.

"Brown 'll have it all his own way," he thought, bitterly.

For the night it turned out that Reddy and Tom had a mattress at the far end of the lodging room, the floor at the other side being fairly well occupied with similar mattresses. Reddy was excited; he talked some and swore at everything. Tom was thoroughly well used to oaths. He had always heard

them. That he was not foul-mouthed himself was due to his being a cheerful-natured, fun-loving boy, who dealt in expletory language for its humorousness only. He was disgusted with Reddy's swearing and he was astonished at his disgust. But when Reddy used the name of Tom's Friend, a name Miss Roslyn had used reverently, he was on fire.

"Stop that, Reddy," he said sharply.

"Stop what?"

"Stop swearing."

"What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"You did n't speak right about my Friend. He's my friend, and I do n't like to hear his name spoken that way."

"What are you talking about?"

"See here, Reddy," and Tom took a hasty resolution, "would you like it if some one kept saying mean things before you about Mother Lide?—the best"—

He did n't get out any more. Reddy sprang at him and gripped his throat with both hands.

"What do you mean? Who are you? What did you say that for? Why do n't you answer?" Then, perceiving that Tom was becoming black in the face, he released him and glared at him.

"How can I answer when you 're choking the life out of me? I mean what I say. Would you like it if somebody slandered Mother Lide?" narrowly noting Reddy's pale face at every word he spoke.

"What do you know about—Mother Lide—as you call her?"

"What do n't I know? I know she loved her boy Billy a great sight more than any other boy in that tenement ever was loved, and I know her boy Billy treated her meaner than any other boy in our tenement ever treated his mother. He went off and left her—her, an old woman—to work early and late, in the sun or rain, to keep herself and Kathie, after she had worked years to keep him, and he about broke her heart—the kindest, nicest, best mother a boy ever had!" facing Reddy squarely. But Reddy had succumbed; his face was buried in his hands.

"You left her for *him*," pointing with scorn to the far side of the room where Brown was talking earnestly with a knot of men—"left her for him, a bully, a coward, and you 've got more sense in your little finger than he 's got in his whole skull, and tonight," finding the words coming faster than he could speak them as he went on, "you was suited to be with him here, with these toughs. You forgot how sick of it all you felt this morning. Now you think, or did think, you 'd go on like these, and you never thought a word about poor, poor Mother Lide, looking up into every face that passes her stand, looking for yours. It 's a shame."

Reddy was like his mother, warm-hearted and impulsive. In his stubborn separation from her and his determined clinging to the associations that had

already set him apart from law-abiding citizens, he had missed her warm, caressing, flattering speech more than he could tell. His heart craved the sight and touch and voice of her, even to heart-sickness at times. But he was as stubborn as he was proud.

With one of those swift changes that had always made him winning since he was born, just as his mother was, he stretched himself out on the mattress, drawing Tom down beside him, with his arm around him, and whispered:

"Now talk low. Tell all about her—tell me."

"I was going for the doctor for her when you stopped me." Tom could feel Reddy tremble.

"For her?"

"She sent me, I mean, for Kathie."

"How did you know me?"

"Why you look just like 'em both; I could n't help know you."

"Did she talk about me?"

"She never mentioned you."

Reddy started involuntarily. A cold, desolate gloom came over him. His mother, who talked so much, never spoke of him!

"Old Mulhaley told me. I would n't dare say your name to her. You *hurt* her."

Then with something like tact he told all manner of little things about Mother Lide, her ways, her sayings, imitating her slight brogue, which he could do to perfection, telling what the neighbors said of her.

Reddy treasured every word. He listened so well, so eagerly, that Tom began to think that Reddy was moved at last—that to-morrow he would go back to his mother.

But Reddy knew better; he could think as well as listen. He had thrown in his lot and he was going to abide by it. This moment's talk of his mother was good, but he was going on as he had begun for all that.

"Now do n't talk again unless I tell you to," he said firmly when Tom paused. "I 'm obliged to you. But this is going to stop right here. You wont have to stay here long, I 'm sure. If I 'm so I can I 'll help you back. But do n't talk any more. I 'm in this gang and in this gang I 'm likely to stay for a while."

Tom was bitterly disappointed, too much so for words. He could have sobbed, but he was ashamed to. He felt as though his whole heart cried out to his heart's Friend, who could and would and did understand all that misery. And it seemed as though his heart was answered with the assurance that Another had known that sorrow to its dregs, the sorrow of battling futilely for a soul that would not heed. Far closer friends they must be than before, Tom thought gratefully. He could understand better what his Friend had lived through, the sorrows he had known; and he begged with all his might that he might never grieve Him through his blindness and hardness.

"Oh, help me, just help me! I *want* to want your way."

And he was strangely comforted and fell asleep.

That night back in Mother Lide's room there was a sorry group. Kathie was out of danger but very pale and weak; her little white face stared out from the pillow on the bed. She had wished Mother Lide to place her so that she could watch the door for Tom.

Mother Lide had finished doing the things necessary to be done about the room, and sat in Kathie's chair by the window. John sat silently by the other window. Both Mother Lide and John dreaded Kathie's quivering-voiced question,—"Why does n't Tom come?"

John had haunting fears that Tom had been injured. Mother Lide, more used to disappointment and desertion, believed he had simply gone for a while, either tired of them or inveigled into some new scheme. John realized far more fully Tom's attachment to Kathie and Mother Lide. And Kathie wanted him so!

"Oh, I hear him," she cried; but the steps stopped at the landing below.

Dr. Gray had brought Kathie some oranges and John began carefully to prepare one as Dr. Gray had shown him. When it was ready he took the little saucer over by the bed, and sitting on the edge he handed her piece by piece. She ate them eagerly.

"John, where 's Tom?"

"He did n't come back last night after he went for the doctor." He had said precisely the same thing a dozen times before.

"Why did n't he come back, John?"

"I do n't know. But I am sure he will come back as soon as he can and will tell us all about it."

"How soon?"

"I do n't think right away, because if he could have come right away he would be here."

"Do you think he is hurt?"

"He never has been hurt. Tom 's the smartest boy in the ward."

"Did he want to go away?"

"No, I know he did n't. He will come the first minute he can, and you want to hurry and get well so he won't find you sick."

"All right, I will."

"Frau Kraf says her son 's got his place out in the country. They 're going next week."

"Is it in the country?"

"There are houses all around. They 'll have a garden. It 's a little brick house with a yard and an apple tree, and some more trees, and some bushes and some flowers in it."

"Oh–h–h!"

"Frau Kraf and her daughter are going to do all their garden work. They know how."

"What does the son do?"

"You know—he's a motorman, and he runs right by that house every trip, so they can see him."

"Oh–h!"

"And Kathie—Mother Lide, can I tell her something?"

"Faith, Johnnie, dear, I'll never be for stopping you talking!"

"Listen, then, Kathie. Frau Kraf says if they *can*, when they're fixed, they want to find some way to have you go out there to see them."

"Oh–h–h–h! Mother, listen!"

"Now, they're kind people! Kathie, you'll be a regular traveler, and what will I be doin'?"

"I'll stay by you, Mother Lide," said John seriously.

"Nobody stays by me long, Johnnie. What with wakes and partings it's little sight I have left."

"But, mother, I won't go," protested Kathie.

"Sure, it would be the makin' of you, and a glad woman I'd be. You mustn't listen to grannie's talk, Kathie."

"Would you take care of the plants, John?" asked Kathie anxiously. "I want them so handsome when Tom comes back."

"Of course. They'll be all right."

"John, do you think Jesus can take care of Tom?"

"Do you?"

"I'm sure he could if Tom was here where we are.

You know Emily in the story knew he took care of them all the time, and I mean to be just like Emily. She prayed to him to take care of all of them. But Tom isn't here."

"Oh, well, Kathie, if Jesus could take care of him here, he could anywhere, so that 's all right."

"It doesn't seem so easy to me," said Kathie doubtfully—"but if you understand it"—

"Certainly; Tom told me about it himself. He said Jesus was his friend."

"Oh, he *did!* Say, mother, I think Tom's all right."

"Johnnie boy, you're getting a great tongue in your head. I don't know what I'd be doin' without you!"

CHAPTER VII

IN A BAD BUSINESS

Exactly what opinion Brown's acquaintances had of Brown was a matter of interest to Tom. He found by watching that many of these men who frequented the house where they lodged were considered far more successful and expert than Brown could claim to be. These men took but scant interest in him, while Brown was feverishly anxious to get in with them. Another set, made up of what might be called stragglers in their business, were open to his proposals and ready to listen to his schemes. By dint of keeping his eyes and ears open, Tom at last thought he understood how things were. It was about the only occupation he had, as Brown was singularly determined to keep hold of him, and he was not allowed a moment by himself. He was always with Reddy or Brown or some one detailed to watch him. As he was generally with Reddy he could put up with it with better grace, but again and again his whole heart sickened within him at the life around him. He had never been given to quarreling with his environment or wishing for alteration of circumstances other than he could himself effect, but now, at times, he longed thirstily, hungrily, for a place

where people were not quite so determined to be bad, where there was a chance for a little blossoming of kindness, and honesty, and decency.

Reddy had ceased to be sociable and was evidently occupied with a scheme of Brown's. As near as Tom could make out Brown was intensely anxious to be one in a plot on foot among the experts, and had secured a quasi promise of participation could he but successfully carry through some smaller operations to prove his fitness. One of these sub-undertakings was to be wholly in his hands with Reddy as aid, though others knew about it, and Tom was aware that he was the bone of contention in this matter. Brown was determined that Tom should be implicated as deeply as possible in some of his plans, and, contrary to all advice, he insisted on having Tom to assist him in his burglary with Reddy. Tom heard all about it in connection with a great variety of other things one night when he was supposed to be asleep.

"What do you want to take that kid in for?" grumbled one man. "Clumsy boy—give the whole thing away!"

"Oh, yes," in reply to an assertion of Brown's, "when he's trained. But you're crazy to let him begin on that."

Brown had been drinking; he drank very heavily lately and it was telling on him. He had very little self-control and easily became violent. The alter-

cation ended as usual in fierce language by Brown and his renewed determination to do precisely as he pleased, no matter what the consequences.

Tom understood the situation. Brown and Reddy were to burglarize some house and Tom was to assist, he rather thought by being obliged to enter the house first.

The other news he gained was that their present rendezvous was considered unsafe for a time, which accounted for a general exodus. Reddy and Tom had an apology for a room in a queer sort of a building, while Brown and two more men occupied one adjoining. Tom was so opposed to Brown that he made a steady business of refusing everything he demanded for the sake of making trouble. Not that he had managed to escape doing what Brown said. He had merely succeeded in raising a disturbance. Now, when he felt it imperative not to do as Brown desired, he saw that he must go about his refusal in a different way.

"What is the whole business, anyway?" he thought, trying to clear things up in his mind. "I 'm to be put into a house, land knows what for—either to go and get some particular thing, or to warn them if there is any reason why they should not come in, or to give the fellow chloroform in the room they want to go into, or something. Now whatever shall I do? I 'll get some fun out of it, anyway. I never came so near dying in my life as I have here. Not a boy

have I seen, not a place have I been where a boy could have any fun. Nothing but smoke and drink and gamble and swear, and back again. I 'll just put up a job on Brown, see if I do n't. Only I hope Reddy will pull out all right."

Just what he was to do he still had not decided when he found himself about one o'clock at night with Brown and Reddy in the brick area of what seemed like a fine house. Brown was secretly very very distrustful of Tom's rather sullen acquiescence, or rather lack of open opposition. Nothing but the amount of liquor he had drunk kept his stubbornness up in opposition to his judgment and his fears. Tom had his instructions. The very narrow window of the pantry they had opened would scarcely admit anything larger than a boy. He was to unlock and unbolt the area door; and then with his dark lantern, giving but a thread of light, he was to go to the second floor, to the bedroom over the area, apply the chloroformed cloth to the man who slept in that room and after a reasonable pause, listening if there might be other disturbance in the house, he was to whistle at the window; one whistle if all was safe, two if he heard any one moving.

They were all silent; everything was silent. Even the light breeze in the two trees in front of the house, and in the trees in the small, high brick-walled garden, gave more the impression of silence than of sound.

The window was skilfully removed. Tom was put inside; he was agile and clever. A little thing like that he could do easily enough. On his feet he wore a sort of felt sock such as Brown and Reddy wore. He arranged his lantern so that he could see. The pantry door was open into the kitchen, from which another door was also open to the back stairs. He hesitated as he stood there. He felt terribly lonesome. No boy Friend was with him now. He was quite alone.

"You wouldn't be in here!" he groaned inwardly. "You wouldn't be burglin'! But I'm not. I'm not burglin'. You won't stay away for good, will you? I'm not burglin'; don't you know it yourself?"

But there was no relief from the lonesomeness. Up the stairs he went. They didn't creak. It was a well made house. He never would know which way to turn, he was sure. The door at the head of the stairs was closed, but it opened smoothly. People who lived in that house kept things oiled. The slender light of his lantern showed him a small, oblong hall and three doors, all closed. His heart beat very fast. It seemed a dreadful thing to open one of those doors. Something must be done, however, and he opened one. It was a bath-room. He opened another. As soon as he opened that he started back, for it seemed quite light. He could see clearly, yet there had seemed from the outside to be no light in the house.

What he saw was a spacious hall; in the half light it seemed palatial to Tom. Doors were closed, but one in front of him, at the end of the hall, stood open. Tom saw why it was light. An arc light from the street shone in through the room in front, lighting the hall, and as he moved cautiously along toward that room he saw that light also came in through a great stairway window. The room with the open door was, he was sure, the room he was to enter. It was a large room. Tom had an impression of a couch and fine chairs, a mirror and pieces of furniture such as he had seen in furniture-store windows. Over at the other side was a bed. Altogether too fine a thing for a bed, but there was a man lying there asleep. Tom could see his beard, and his hair falling across his forehead, and his arms lying upward above his head.

Tom was still clutching the chloroform cloth, and he had the bottle he was to redrench it from. He had meant to drop it as soon as he entered the house but he was still clutching it. He dropped it now. He wondered if it would do any harm where it was. To be sure he was in the right room he stepped to the window nearest the bed. There was a wire screen in it, but he could see enough to know that he was right, and he thought he heard Brown's voice whispering.

"Good enough for him!" thought Tom, shrugging his shoulders. "But I must n't let Reddy get caught; no, sir!"

Now he must do what he was going to do. He stepped to the side of the bed, pushed up the slide of his lantern and held it behind him.

"Say, mister," he said, in a quiet but firm voice. "Say, mister, wake up."

The man stirred uneasily. Then he opened his eyes directly on Tom.

"Say, mister, don't worry any, but there's a couple of burglars plannin' to get in your house. They're not in. I'm the only one that's in."

Whatever of astonishment the man experienced was overcome by amusement at the conclusion of Tom's remark.

"Well, you're not a very dangerous burglar, apparently."

Tom stepped to the screen and gave two clear, sharp whistles.

"What did you do that for?" The man's hand came down heavily on Tom's shoulder.

There was a very distinct noise from the area below and at the same time a window in the room overhead was pushed up, followed by a sound of softened running on the pavement and then by a pistol shot from the room overhead and a delighted exclamation,—"Hit, as I live!"

"What did you do that for?" repeated the man sternly.

"So they would get away and not be caught," answered Tom, staring down the street.

Was one of them hit? If so, which one? How he did want to be going. But there was no moving with that heavy hand on his shoulder.

"You stand right there until I slip on some clothes. Now do n't you move."

Hearing some one coming down the stairs the man hastily stepped outside the door, closing it after him. There was a sound of low, excited voices in the hall. Evidently the person who had fired the shot had come down to report.

Tom looked out the window. There were two policemen coming on a run. The police call had been given. His forehead and the back of his hands were wet. He had not thought of the policemen getting there so soon.

"Oh, I would n't leave You all alone with a policeman just about to get you," he cried out.

He really had made a noise, and the bedroom door opened and he heard some one going down the stairs, while the gentleman he had already seen returned.

"What 's the matter?"

But there was very little the matter with Tom then. Peace had come to him again. The loneliness was gone, and the wild sort of gratitude he felt made everything else seem of little moment. Surely he could stand anything if he did not have to be alone.

"You 're not going to hand me over to those policemen, are you?"

"Why not? Don't you deserve it?"

"No."

"Aren't you in my house, where you don't belong, in the middle of the night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now tell me all about it. Sit down there. Tell me the exact truth."

The gentleman's voice was kind, and so was his look. The gas-jet he had lighted made a pleasant light in the room. Tom could hear that the policemen had come in and that some one was talking to them in low tones.

"Go on."

"There isn't much to it. A man was going to rob this house. He put me in through a little window and I unlocked the door, and I was to put that cloth to your face," pointing to the discarded cloth on the floor, "because what they wanted was in this room. And I was to whistle if any one moved, and so after I told you I whistled."

"What did you tell me for?"

"I didn't see how I could help coming in, and that was the only thing I could think of to do."

"Well, *I* think you could have helped coming in; a boy that looks as strong and capable as you do! You said one man, but two men ran away."

Tom was silent.

"Weren't there two men?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you say one man?"

"One man was running the job, so I just said one man."

"Who were they?"

"Why, I could n't tell you," in surprise.

"Why not?"

"I should think you could see how mean it would be," indignantly.

"I do n't see it at all. To be stopped short might be the saving of one or both of them, and they were evidently harming you very seriously. It would prevent that."

Tom smiled rather incredulously.

"Come, now; who are your people and your friends, and what are you in such bad company for?"

Any tenement child has an inbred distrust of the advances of the more moneyed class. Tom had no idea of telling about Mother Lide and Kathie. It was bad enough to be in a tight place oneself and of course he had absolutely no claim on them.

"I have n't any people."

"What is your name?"

"Tom Hart."

"Thomas Hart, why do you say you have n't any people?"

"I do n't know anybody in this whole city," said Tom doggedly, "except those two men and some more just like them, and I only know them by name."

"Now the policemen went after those men," continued the gentleman after a pause, "and as one of them was shot, very likely they will be caught; what are you going to do?"

"Why, I'll get along all right," said Tom. "I'd be glad if one of them was caught, but I'd be sorry for Reddy."

"Reddy?"

"That's the name one of them goes by." Tom was vexed at his slip.

"Well, Tom, suppose I let you go now, will you come back again and tell me about yourself and explain things to me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, I doubt it. At any rate, I have no intention of letting you go to-night. Come, now, I want you to show me how you came up-stairs and how you got into the house and all about it."

"All right, sir."

Tom's mind was still revolving around Reddy. Was it Reddy who was shot? If so, would Reddy be the one caught? It did not seem possible, and yet Tom was so afraid it might be Reddy.

"That beast of a Brown!" thought Tom vindictively. "It ought to be him. But I must find Reddy."

How he was to get away to find anybody looked like a difficult matter.

Tom picked up his lantern. He went down the hall, showed his companion how he opened the bath-room door, went down the back stairs, showed him how he came in the pantry window and had gone to the door and unlocked and unbolted it. The gentleman opened the door to see if it really would open; seizing the opportunity, Tom darted through the opening, up the area steps and away.

"Confound him!" said the gentleman as he stared blankly at the spot by the area railing where he had seen him last. "I was too sharp with him," he thought regretfully. "I scared him. I wanted to keep him and do something for him. Mighty good stuff in him, I'll be bound. Just Winthrop's age," with a groan. "When I opened my eyes and saw that straight little fellow standing there with that light behind him like a halo, I thought for a moment he had come at last. Oh, why could n't I have been more careful!"

CHAPTER VIII

NEW QUARTERS

As soon as Tom saw that he was free on the street and unpursued, he went slower while he made up his mind what to do. He was wholly unacquainted with the streets. Had it been daylight, with people coming and going, he must inevitably have lost his bearings. But the streets looked quite the same as they had when Tom last came through them. He had observed them very keenly then and could retrace his steps now. His heart was in a tumult. If Reddy had been the one shot his chance of escaping from the police was very slight. Perhaps he was already taken. If so, his going back to fall into Brown's clutches was sheerest folly. But as long as he could not be sure about Reddy he had to go on. When he saw a policeman he waited until he could safely get by. By closely watching all the landmarks he had previously noted he found he was returning to more familiar quarters. He would go to their room. He dreaded to. He was afraid that if Brown saw him he would be angry enough to kill him on the spot. Of course Brown did not know what Tom had done inside the house, but Brown was the sort of a man who had to wreak vengeance

for every failure on somebody—the weakest at hand. But Tom had to go on. Gritting his teeth together and squaring his shoulders, and bending forward to endure a blow, he dashed in the entrance of the building where he and Reddy had their room, up the stairs, and waited nervously beside their closed door. He had expected to hear noises from Brown's room or the hall, loud talking, vociferations, explanations; but all was still. He thought he heard a groan inside the door. Bracing himself and with a throbbing inward cry of, "You 're so good to stay with me. I 'm so glad of it," he tried the door. It opened. There was no light. It was darker there even than out in the hall and he had had to feel his way there. Hoping that the bit of candle in a potato and the matches were where he could find them he groped his way toward a table. He was sure he heard a suppressed but difficult breathing from the direction of the bed. He thought if he struck a match and saw that it was Brown or some of the other men on the bed he would make a dash for the door and get away. He found a match; it sputtered twice before it lighted. He looked toward the bed and in the flare of the candle saw a pair of bright, strained eyes looking at him.

"Oh, Reddy!" he cried, kneeling down beside the bed and grasping Reddy's hand.

"Well, Tom, you 've been scaring a fellow bad enough!"

"Where were you hurt, Reddy?" There was blood on Reddy's clothes and on the bed.

"Shoulder; it's only a flesh wound, I know—but I bled so. It only just scraped through."

Reddy was very weak and pale. He spoke in a gasping way. "I don't know why it uses me up so. I'm a chicken."

"Where's Brown?"

"He's caught," with a flicker of a smile. "After I was hit I began to run slower; couldn't get on to save me, and finally I gave out and slumped down in a little dark corner, in by a church. Brown he swore and went on. He was just crazy. He gets that way. The cops passed by me, and blest if they didn't catch up with Brown; can't think how he let 'em; drink, I guess; and they fetched him along back right past me. And after that I came on and got up here; didn't see nobody, and it's the first night since we've been here that this hole hasn't just been alive with people. But this here's no place for me. Brown will send 'em here for me. Yes, he will. If they hold him he will. He'll wait and see what they do, then he will. But I can't help it. I'm wore out," wearily. "They won't have no evidence against Brown, I'm thinking. He wasn't caught in the act, and none of those folks could identify him, I'll be bound."

Tom was disappointed, but as he sat there he began to think that perhaps Brown was wanted for some

other job, and might be well enough known to be held for something else. If so, Reddy was in a bad situation. Tom cut off Reddy's coat and shirt. The shoulder was badly lacerated and the wound looked very distressing already. Reddy's not over-clean shirt on the raw flesh had not improved it any. Evidently there was no bullet there. Tom got some water and bathed it, but he was not very hopeful about it. Dr. Gray had used all sorts of things to stop the poison when Jim tore his arm with the little cannon last Fourth of July.

Reddy moaned and Tom was distracted. Reddy ought to have a doctor. But anything else than secrecy might bring on lots of trouble.

"How much money you got, Reddy?"

"Precious little."

"This sort of thing don't pay so well's if you were getting two and a half a day steady like Joe Mulhaley."

"Who said it did?" angrily. "Quit prodding that place!"

"I'm doing it easy. You 've got to get away from here. Do you know anything about this town?"

"Not much."

"Do you know any other place like this, only way off, where I might get a place for you to stay?"

"No."

"They'll be looking for a shot man, so we'll have to keep quiet about it."

"Get me some whiskey."

"I won't do it."

"Why not?"

"I don't believe you 've taken much of anything but beer and whiskey and tobacco for a week."

"Too hot for anything else."

"That's what makes you so weak-kneed and upset so easy. You oughtn't to mind a shot much."

"Get out!"

"I'll go get you something and then you'll just have to start out with me. I'll help you all I can, and we'll go; it's getting light, and by the time you can't go any further perhaps we'll get a safe place. I want to get a doctor, but you would n't dare have one here."

Reddy's eyes were wearily closing.

Tom saw there was no time for delay, and taking what money he could find on Reddy he started out.

The saloon restaurant where they ate was one that was kept open all night, but he was afraid to go there. He remembered another, and went to that. There was only one set of men in there, and they were in a half stall. Tom could not see them very well. He asked for a bowl of soup and drank it. It was strong, hot soup. Then he asked if he could have a pitcher and take away some if he would bring the pitcher right back. The man was about to say no, as a matter of course, but after looking at Tom a moment went off for the pitcher of soup. Tom felt

so much better himself after the soup that he thought it would help Reddy also.

The candle was still sputtering away when he entered the room. Reddy was moving restlessly and moaning. Tom persuaded him to taste the soup, and after one swallow Reddy drank it all. Tom kept stopping him to make him drink it slowly.

"You 're a good fellow, Tom," said Reddy gratefully. "Confound me if I know what makes you so good."

"I've got to take the pitcher back, Reddy, and you must be all right to start when I come."

He made quick time with the pitcher, gathered up in the room what Reddy possessed, tried to wipe some of the blood off Reddy, but not very successfully, helped him on with a large coat of Brown's that concealed matters somewhat, and off they started. Even by the light of the candle Tom could see the way Reddy whitened around the mouth. And he did n't know where they were going. It looked like a hopeless business.

Out in the street they felt the chilly breeze of very early morning. It was life-giving to Tom, but Reddy shivered. Tom was nervously anxious to have Reddy get over as much space as possible before his strength gave out, a thing Tom was convinced would happen.

"Use me for a cane, Reddy, I 'm strong; come, we 'll have to hurry! It 's getting light awful fast."

The mingling of dawn and electric light produced a sickly effect. To keep in a mean part of the city was necessary, and to avoid going in a circle Tom kept as long on one street as he could. They went a long way. The character of the street was changing perceptibly. The houses were many of them very small. Tom began to be afraid that they would get out of the city, or that the street would improve. He already felt as though they were out of the more criminal district. He wished to remain in the city. To Tom the country was a strange, unnatural development. Give him a good, paved street, with houses close together. He could not conceive of one being able to escape observation in the country. One was a target there.

Reddy was moving more slowly and with more and more difficulty. His lips were white and pressed together. Evidently the strength he had received from the hot soup was leaving him; he could not go much farther. Tom was afraid lest at any moment Reddy might fall unconscious, and the police station would then be inevitable. There seemed so far to have been no chance of a stopping-place. Everything was still closed and silent. Tom let nothing escape him, but as yet he had not seen anything that offered even the barest chance of asylum. His heart was in a tumult of hurried beseechings.

"Can't You help me? Do n't let Reddy give up! You must know how it is. Keep him up; I know

you can. I know you can help. I do n't mean I 'm expecting you to make a place for me; I 'm going to do all I can. Just the first chance I see I 'll work it. I 'll try my hardest if you will only keep Reddy up till I find something!"

Over and over he kept repeating such words in his mind, and looking at every door and window. It was clear that he must turn around soon. Far down the street he saw a door open in one of the smallest houses. He could see it was a little frame building. A small girl came out. Tom could see that the place was a store and that the store window was closed by two old-fashioned, heavy, wooden shutters. The little girl struggled helplessly with the shutters. As they came near her Tom could see that she was sobbing violently, though in a suppressed way. She could do nothing with the shutters. Reddy was lunging in his gait and Tom helped him sit down on the step, propped as comfortably as might be against the door-frame.

"What 's the matter, little girl?"

She looked around apprehensively, trying to stop her sobs.

"Do n't be afraid. I 'm going to help you. What 's the matter?"

But she could n't or would n't speak.

"Do you want these shutters down?"

She nodded.

"There, there," kindly, "do n't you cry. I 'll fix

it in a jiffy," and seeing how the shutters came down he took off one and then the other, while the little girl, though sobbing, stood watching.

"Now, then, where do they go? I can carry one at a time, I guess."

She slipped before him into the door, and he lugged in one heavy shutter; he put it where she showed him and went for the other. It was a poor enough sort of a store. In the window were some large fruit-jars holding tea and coffee; a box of raisins; a box that said "RICE" on it; some written signs of "FLOUR" and "SUGAR;" a box of candles; a jar with some striped sticks of candy; some soap; even to Tom it seemed the poorest sort of an array. After he had taken in the other shutter the little girl began to cry again.

"Now you tell me what's the matter," persuaded Tom. "I'll help you, you see if I don't!"

Looking up into Tom's brown eyes the child found her tongue, and in a sobbing whisper stumbled out the words, "Pap broke his leg, last night, and he's gone to the hospital, and we ain't been here long, and we don't know much of nobody, and mammy's cryin' sick, and Bobby's takin' a heap of worryin', and mammy says he's sick, and I can't keep store. I'm too little, and I'm afraid, and pap was just gettin' a start on his store, and if we don't keep store something awful will happen, for it's the last thing pap's tried, and he's tried a heap o'

things," and her tale ran off into an unintelligible conglomeration of words and sobs.

"It 'll be all right." Tom patted the little girl, and shook her gently, hoping to shake the sobs all out and let her begin afresh.

"You go tell your mammy somebody took down the shutters for you and wants to speak to her."

The child obediently disappeared through the door at the rear of the store, and after a few minutes of anxious waiting she came back, followed by a pale, worn-out-looking woman, carrying a boy of about three, who lay in her arms almost like a dead child.

The woman looked at Tom apathetically. It seemed as though she had suffered and endured until she was wholly numb.

Tom was filled with pity. "See here," he said earnestly, "I 'm in trouble myself, and if you 'll help me I can help you. That fellow is my friend," pointing to Reddy sitting on the step, his head leaned back, his eyes closed, his sharp, pinched features cut like a cameo in the gray light of the morning. "He 's hurt and tired—nothin' catchin'—and he can't go no further, and I can't leave him. We do n't know anybody in this city and do n't know any places here. He 'll be all right soon. If you 'll let me fetch him in here and give me a place for him to lie on, I 'll take care of him so you won't need to even see him, and I 'll work every minute for you. I 'll keep store. I know how, and I 'll lock up and unlock, and

scrub and take care of the children while you go to the hospital to see your man."

The woman changed expression for the first time, and gave some signs of listening.

"I'm in earnest," his straightforward eyes compelling her attention. "I'll do my best. As soon as Reddy—that's him—can move along, we'll get out, if you want us to, or if you want me to help I'll stay and help you and he can go along. I'll watch the children and give you a chance to rest up. I can do it."

He had scored another item in his favor.

She tried to face the situation, looked out at Reddy, then closely at Tom.

"You 're a good boy, I guess. I do n't feel 's if I could be any worse off. I can't lose anything, and you could help if you're willing. There's two rooms up-stairs and a bed in each. You can have the back, I guess."

Tom's heart gave a leap of relief.

"You won't be sorry. We won't be any trouble, and I'll help you like everything."

Fearful lest something might happen to interfere, he turned to Reddy. The sun had just managed to shine into the street, and fell full on Reddy's death-like face. "Come, Reddy," Tom whispered in his ear, "you are safe now. Come, brace up! I'll help; just once more. That's it; try, now; I'll help. There!"

Reddy tried his best, and struggled up. Tom



"THE WOMAN LOOKED AT TOM."

helped him in, through the store and into the room behind, a kitchen, and up the narrow stairs, though how that was done Tom did n't know. The stairs opened into a box-like hall which opened into two rooms, one over the store and one over the kitchen. The woman, still holding the child, pointed to the room over the kitchen. In it was a bed with two pillows. There was nothing else in the room but two grocery boxes.

Tom did not dare begin by bothering the woman for anything. He got off Reddy's shoes and the loose coat. He felt that it was absolutely necessary to bathe the wound, and went boldly down to the kitchen sink, got some water in a basin, and went up to Reddy. He did what he could, but was conscious that it was a desperately poor job.

He went down-stairs again; the woman was sitting in a rocking-chair with her head leaned back as though she were asleep, and holding the inert child. That the woman was absolutely worn out was certain; that the child was sick was certain; that the little girl, who was sitting in a corner, still crying, was nearly sick with grief, was also certain. Plainly, Tom was the only well, sensible person in the crowd, and he tried to brace himself up for the situation. It was good, after all, to have something to do. "And it is n't like being alone," he thought. "*We* can do it together."

There was an old sofa in the room, a table, a stove

without any fire, a cupboard with dishes in it. It looked to him as though the room might have been a very comfortable room some time, but it was littered and dirty and close and hot. He opened the door into the store, and the back door of the kitchen; a refreshing breeze swept through at once. He stepped out the back door and gathered some pieces of boxes and began to make a fire in the stove. The yard was a small affair with a high fence around it. In one corner was a heap of coal. When his fire was going he put some fresh water in the kettle and set it on the fire; his idea was to make some tea for the woman. The little girl had stopped crying and was watching.

"Here, sis," he said; "pick up all the stuff around the floor so I can burn it in my fire."

She bestirred herself at once.

"What's your name, little girl?"

"Daisy."

"Oh! Daisy what?"

"Daisy Bower."

"That's a country name for sure. Put them dishes and things over there in the sink, and I'll wash 'em in a minute. How old are you?"

"I'm eight."

"You're a mighty small pattern for eight! Get a move on you. Such an old girl as that! You go upstairs to your mammy's room and fetch down a pillow. I'm going to put it on the sofa."

He went out into the store and got some tea.

"It's nice living handy to a store," he thought.

He found a loaf of bread in the window under a newspaper, and perceived that they must take a supply of bread from a baker. Probably their biggest trade in the neighborhood was in bread.

"I must watch out for that," he thought.

He made his tea, cut off some bread, and laid it on top of the stove to toast, fixed the pillow on the sofa, and told the little girl to go and sit on the store step and let him know if any one came. He could n't find any milk, but he got some sugar, and, having decided that the tea tasted very good indeed, he took the pillow that was already on the sofa, placed it on the floor in the breeze, and then said:

"You let me put Bobby on this pillow here where it 's cool. He needs air, I guess."

Mrs. Bower opened her eyes, and Tom persuaded her to let him put the child down. He did it very carefully, and she seemed satisfied.

"Here 's some hot tea and some toast. It 's good."

She shook her head, then seized the tea and drank it eagerly, hot as it was. He gave her a slice of toast, and after some hesitation she ate it and drank another cup of tea.

"Now you lie down on the sofa. I 'll look after Bobby."

Without waiting for objection he tried to get her

over to the sofa, and after a moment she resigned herself. She had scarcely lain down before she was asleep.

"I guess that poor Daisy wants some," he thought, and he carried her out some bread and a cup of the tea. The little thing devoured her share as though she were half starved.

"That little chap will die before his mother wakes up," thought Tom in a worried way. "Wish 't I knew what to do for him. I 'll go and give Reddy some tea, and then I guess I 'll have some myself, and see what I 'll do next."

CHAPTER IX

DR. ROGERS

Reddy was far beyond tea or toast. He lay in a stupor and Tom felt helpless.

"They're all just alike," he thought. "Bobby down there lies just like Reddy, and they both lie like Mrs. Bower, only I guess she's asleep. Weren't you a doctor when You grew up? The Great Physician, she said. Won't You help?" and he felt braver; it seemed as though help were very near.

He heard a queer little cry from the shop and judged that it must be Daisy.

She met him at the top of the stairs with two words, "Want sugar."

Tom guessed somebody wanted to buy some and, sure enough, a small boy was waiting for ten cents' worth of sugar.

Tom had bought sugar, and tea, and coffee, and such things for Mother Lide, enough to go through the clerk-like process of dispensing it with the air of an expert. He smiled patronizingly at the boy and said "Come again" in the most professional manner. The pleasure of selling things was new to him, and he was delighted when a woman came in for ten cents' worth of tea.

"Where's Mr. Bower?" said she, eying him suspiciously.

"Sad accident, last night. Mr. Bower broke his leg, and he's at the hospital!"

"You don't say! How did it happen?"

"Can't give you the particulars. Mrs. Bower secured me to tend store, this morning, and I don't know all the facts."

"I'll just step in and see Mrs. Bower," said the woman, officiously.

"She's asleep. She must n't be disturbed." Tom was very firm. "She'll be awake in the course of an hour or so, and will be glad to see you."

It was with difficulty that he was able to dissuade the woman, and she very reluctantly took her departure.

"Here, you, Daisy," he said; "you go in that room and you take this paper, and you keep the flies off your mother and Bobby. Understand? And you're to bolt the door on the inside—understand? And you're not to open it unless I say 'Open the door for Tom.' Understand?"

Daisy nodded her head solemnly, and started to the kitchen. Tom heard the bolt slide.

"Guess they can't get in now; and now we'll have the whooping trade or I'll eat my hat! Everybody around here seems to spend ten cents."

Two women came in. One bought rice and one bought coffee, and they plied him right and left with

questions about Mr. Bower. Tom was sorely put to it, but he braved it out. When they left he began hurriedly looking over his stores. He found some raisins, some cans of things, some crackers, and a pail of what looked like jelly. He dusted out the window, rearranged things, and began making plans for increased sales. A stream of curious children came in and bought most of the candy. He persuaded some to buy crackers and raisins. For an hour he did a rushing business, and his stock was getting disreputably low. Several women tried the back room door and were chagrined to find it locked.

Tom began to get very anxious to see how his patients were. Finally the store was empty, and nobody seemed to be coming that way. He went to the bolted door.

"Open the door for Tom, Daisy," he said.

No answer. He knocked on the door. No sound from within. He tried several times without success.

"Here's a pretty mess!" was his ejaculation.

He went back behind the counter, trying to think what to do, when a young man came in.

The young man was exceedingly well dressed and had a professional air that was very impressive.

"So! She did get some one to help her!" he said. "I want to see Mrs. Bower."

"I wish you could!" answered Tom, "but the door's locked."

"I must see her," returned the young man in a

great hurry. "I promised to tell her how I left her husband."

"Oh, are you a doctor?" eagerly.

"Yes"; though, as a matter of fact, he was only a medical student.

Then Tom entered into a blunt explanation of the state of things within, and the bolted door. "She's lying stupid-like, and I about believe that little boy's dead, and as for Reddy, he's awful far gone."

The medical student had rarely struck such a bonanza, and he was wild to get inside.

"Say," said Tom, "if you'll mind the store I'll go around in the alley and get over the fence and let you in."

The medical student impatiently agreed, advising him to hurry, and stood there snapping his watch.

Tom hurried, but he was n't sure of his surroundings, and when he reached the fence it was no easy matter to climb it.

On entering the back door the sight of Daisy stretched on the floor in a profound slumber explained matters.

He unbolted the door and the medical student strode in.

He examined Mrs. Bower.

"Nothing the matter with her," he said, "except lack of proper food and sleep. She'll be better when she wakes up. Same here," he said, feeling of Daisy.

He shook his head over Bobby. "Prostrated by the heat and inability to assimilate improper food. Bad way."

Tom had filled the kettle and a large pot with water to have the remains of his fire accomplishing something. The fire was out but the water was warm.

The young man appeared to hesitate, then he said, half to Tom and half to himself,—"Have to do it, I guess; he 's in a bad way. We 'll sponge him off."

He went to the chest of drawers and opened one after another until he found some towels and cloths that suited him. Then he took off the child's single garment and gently sponged the hot, emaciated little form.

Tom stood watching, his eyes full of pity and his heart filled with a determination to be able to do a thing like that himself if it was needed.

"Is that good for anybody like that," hazarded Tom, "Doctor — Doctor"—

"Doctor Rogers," supplemented the young man. "Yes, of course it is. If there 'd been some soda in this water for this little fellow it would have been better. Now you 've got to get some milk and be sharp about it."

Tom was sure there was none in the house and he did not know where to go for any, but he started, wondering what would happen to the store in his absence. He reached the store door with his

pitcher, to be gladdened by the sight of a milk wagon right in front of him.

"There, now, that's Your doings," he thought happily. "I never did see such a friend! You're the best—the best." He felt as though his own unaided genius would have kept him hunting for milk in the house until the wagon was beyond call.

The quickness of his return with a quart of milk won a glance of approval from the medical student.

"Hurry up now, heat up some of that milk and a little water."

Tom started up a small fire again and managed to heat a small tin of milk quick enough to suit his director.

Bobby had opened his eyes and was looking around in a listless way. The doctor had slipped on his one article of wearing apparel and, without much hint of awkwardness, though it was a new business to him, managed to give the child some milk. The little fellow seemed refreshed, and the doctor laid him back on the floor as comfortably as possible where there was the most air. The child closed his eyes.

"Now he is asleep, a natural sleep," said the doctor with great satisfaction. "You give him some more hot milk when he wakes up, and tell the mother to wash the little girl as I did him, and give her some hot milk. Mrs. Bower must have more to eat—chicken broth—beef soup—something nourish-

ing." His air was excessively professional again and he was snapping his watch.

"Please, sir," Tom edged in, "there 's the other one, up-stairs. He 's in a worse way yet. He 's in an awful bad way."

The medical student became more alert. Here was luck indeed. He followed Tom up-stairs and uttered a somewhat unprofessional exclamation at the sight of Reddy's white face.

"He 's shot," whispered Tom.

"Ah," and the student began his examination.

Tom stood anxiously by.

"Boil me some water—quick now. Make it *boil*."

And Tom did. It was getting to be about ten o'clock, or later, and he had not had a moment's rest for hours and hours. The time since the day before seemed interminable. And he was desperately tired. But he felt helped along by that brave, invigorating Spirit that seemed to smooth everything out before him and make things go right—such a ready, helpful, loving, and very able Friend.

"There never was a boy like You," Tom said, over and over; "never; You 're the best! I 'll never go back on You. I 'll try to be like You the most I can, I will!"

The water was boiled and he went up-stairs with it. Doctor Rogers sent him down to the chest for any towels or cloths he could find, and when Tom

got back the young man was preparing to dress the wound.

"It is n't doing well," he said. "Ought to have been seen to hours ago, from the looks of it. However, there is nothing very bad about it. He 's all run down—been living on liquor and tobacco, and poor sort of food. Men that live that way do n't want to get shot. Nothing to fall back on. How 'd he get shot?"

"I did n't see him shot. I found him that way where we were staying. We do n't live in this city, and I wanted to get him off if he 'd been getting into trouble."

The young man looked at Tom curiously, and, greatly to Tom's relief, he let the matter drop.

Tom watched him dress the wound.

"Could you do that?" asked the student.

"I could do just what you did now after seeing you."

"All right; I 'll leave you some things and you can have the job. These people here are all — ah — prostrated, so to speak. This fellow needs some food, just what the woman needs. Now do n't go and fetch him beer and whiskey. He 'll die sure if you do."

"I won't."

"He needs bathing. If you take half-way care of him he 'll be all right, but you must feed the whole kit of them, and mind what I said about him."

He mixed a potion, gave Reddy a spoonful of it and told Tom to give it to him again in the evening and in the middle of the night, if he was restless.

"Got to go now," snapping his watch again. "You tell Mrs. Bower to take those two children and ride with them on the five-mile open car. They only need something like that. Well, good bye," with quite a friendly smile; "I'll drop in on you again to-morrow maybe, if my — ah — professional engagements permit." And with quite a bow he got himself down-stairs and out.

As Tom stood in the store trying to stave off the weariness he felt overcoming him, he heard a moan. He went hastily to the back room and saw Mrs. Bower sitting up on the sofa, her hands to her head, and staring wildly at the two children sleeping on the floor.

"They're all right," said Tom, in a matter of fact tone, though his heart was thumping at the strangeness of her appearance, "just asleep. Bobby's doing first-rate."

She sank back on the pillow.

"I thought—they were—dead," she sobbed hysterically.

"Alive as ever. Bobby's a lot better. Here," pouring out some of the still hot milk, "drink this. I bought a quart."

There was a bang at the store door and Tom went out to find the baker had come.

"Same?" he asked.

"Five more," said Tom at random, sure that custom would be lively.

"Where 's Bower?"

"Hospital. Store 's going on just the same."

"Glad of that; sorry for Bower." He delivered twenty loaves and rushed out. He was behind time.

Tom surveyed the twenty loaves with the greatest satisfaction, and returned to the back room.

Mrs. Bower had sipped her milk.

"Feel better?"

"Yes, I feel like a new person."

Then he told her all the news of the morning; how the doctor had left word that her husband was doing well and that she could see him the next day; that he had sponged Bobby and fed him hot milk and that she must do the same thing for Daisy; and that he said they needed meat soup.

"I guess he 's right," said Mrs. Bower. "I 've been knowing we all needed different to eat, but it 's been so hot and the children so captious. I 'm a right good cook, too. I know how. I 'll get a bit of soup-meat and make a broth that will strengthen us all."

Then he told her that trade had used up about all their stock, people had come in so to hear about the accident, and that as he knew they were coming back to see her he had bought more bread.

"They 'll be coming for their bread mighty soon

now," said Mrs. Bower, "I 'd best tend shop; you look tuckered out yourself. I 'll brush my hair and freshen up a bit and then you can rest you whilst I tend shop."

Tom very thankfully agreed, and when she went into the shop, rested and feeling as though there was still life and hope before her, he threw himself on the sofa and went instantly to sleep.

Mrs. Bower came back and looked at him closely.

"A nice-looking boy as ever was, and just as good and smart to help as can be. The good Lord was certainly thinking of me when he let him happen here in my day of trouble."

She went up and looked at Reddy. "He 's got the sort of a face for a mother to long for and make of in her heart, but he 's a sick boy. Well, I guess we can make out with that smart boy to do for him and help me."

The neighbors swarmed in to buy bread and she could have sold more, and pies into the bargain, had she had them. In addition to the idle curiosity and love of any sort of excitement that actuated most of them, there was some genuine neighborliness and desire to be sociable. The Bowers were new and shy, and Mrs. Bower had been tied to her back room with the half-sick children, and she realized now for the first time that these women could have a good thought for her.

"I'd take a pie every other day regular, if you kept 'em fresh," said one.

"I'd buy my bread here instead of up at the corner if you laid in more."

"I like a bit of cake now and then, or cookies," said one.

"If you'd keep apples, now, I think they'd sell, if they were n't too high."

"If I could run in here for a fry of bacon or ham," said one, "I'd prize it."

Mrs. Bower began to think that perhaps instead of losing their little trade she might materially increase it.

CHAPTER X

BOWER'S AGENT

"Where am I?" asked Reddy wearily.

"You're in the boss place, Reddy, that's where you are, and everything is all right." Tom spoke in a low, confidential voice. He was dressing the wound and Reddy had become really conscious of his surroundings for the first time.

"Quit hurting me so, Tom."

"I'll be through in a minute. It's getting along better, and I've got a first-rate bowl of stuff for you here. She made it."

"Who's she?"

"Mrs. Bower—where we are staying; and she's taking real hold, too. You've got two sheets on this bed, and she washed 'em, and the pillow-case. Don't you call it good doings? I washed the floor and the window. Don't it look pretty good here? Don't it smell good here? A woman gave me some sassafras stuff and she said it was a healthy smell."

"I smell that stuff you're foolin' with more"—

"This—oh—this helps that place get well."

"What became of Brown?"

"Don't know and don't want to."

"He 'll run me down if he 's loose."

"Do n't be a baby! You 're free from him and can't help yourself, so do n't think about him"—

"I 'll have to think of something."

"If you only just knew my Friend to think about you would feel different. You would feel sure everything was going to be all right and as though you could brace up equal to anything."

"Oh, pshaw, that 's the way you feel after a square meal, with money in your pocket."

Tom knew that to be true and admitted it.

"The trouble is with me, Reddy. I can't talk it off right, but you feel that Somebody cares, and that Somebody cares no matter what you do. And you can't keep anything shut away, you 're not put to that trouble, and you do n't have to explain, you are known just the way you are—your best and your worst; and then next, you know it 's Somebody who is always up with the best and down with the worst, and you get on, and you feel good."

"You mean—Him—I suppose, do you?" asked Reddy after a pause.

"Yes, and it 's true. You see I know it. Now I 'm through. I 'm not very fast about it. How 's this? Taste. Good?"

Reddy smiled appreciatively and Tom at once felt a sick longing to see Kathie.

"What 's the matter, Tom?"

"You look so much like Kathie!"

"The dickens I do!"

"You eat a sight. I thought there would be some of that left for me. I've got to go now. I'm pretty busy. You can blow this whistle if you want anything. I'll be down-stairs."

"You're an awful good boy, Tom," said Reddy gratefully.

Down-stairs Mrs. Bower was waiting with the children. She had tied on their hats. She had only to go a block to get the electric car and she was going to ride as long as she could for ten cents. Tom had persuaded her to go the day before, and Bobby was so manifestly improved by it, and she felt so strengthened by it herself, that she was eager to go this afternoon.

Her heart felt warm toward Tom as he came into the store, his eager, honest face alight with goodwill toward her and the children.

"I'd like to carry Bobby for you to the car if the store would keep itself," he said.

"I can carry him. I believe I would n't have had anything of him left to carry, if it had n't been for you, Tom. I believe he'd have died yesterday"— She spoke impulsively and Tom reddened at the feeling in her voice.

"He's all right now, anyway. I'll take good care of things."

"I know that."

Daisy piped up a shrill good-bye, and away they went.

Tom had a pencil and paper and he went to work taking account of stock. He meant to talk with Mrs. Bower that night and see if he or she could not replenish their wares. He had a variety of schemes for increasing business, and as he whistled and looked into things, and cleaned out boxes and brushed shelves, and dusted and wiped places, and washed spots and did a hundred things to improve appearances before Mrs. Bower came back, he was keeping up a running fire of plans with his boy Friend.

"I just believe You must have kept a store yourself," he thought enthusiastically; "You put me up to so many good ways! I'm equal to keeping my eyes open myself, too! I'm not just going to wait for a boost. Trade's first-rate. I'll fix our store to look as good as Ryan's saloon. We'll have things great."

The window looked fine inside, and he got out the ladder and cleaned it outside.

"They make you work, do n't they?" jeered a boy coming along the walk.

Tom laughed. "Work's easy enough."

"How slick you're fixing up!" said a woman, coming across the street to investigate.

"Yes. We're going to get in a lot of things. To-morrow afternoon we're going to have an opening; low prices. Come over."

"Well, I will."

"That sounded good enough," chuckled Tom.

"If Mrs. Bower will agree we'll run the business to-morrow."

Tom polished everything that would polish, and scrubbed nearly everything that would scrub, and was a very red-faced, perspiring boy when Mrs. Bower came home.

"What have you been doing, Tom?" she exclaimed.

"How 's this?" wiping his wet face. "Pretty clean store! We 're pretty near out of everything. After they 're in bed let 's plan a new start."

Mrs. Bower's face looked younger and more hopeful. The crowding, sickening worry of things seemed to have dropped from her; she was by nature energetic, and it did her good to feel that she had a little energy left.

"I 'll get a real good bite of supper for us, if you can watch out for Bobby, and we 'll see about things afterwards. You 've made it look powerful slick. Bobby chirked up wonderful on the cars—clapped his hands twice."

The breeze was at the front of the store, and Tom sat on the step holding Bobby and talking to him in a soothing, funny way that brought more than one smile to the wan face.

It made Tom think of the way John talked to the babies he minded, and his eyes filled with such a sudden mist that he saw two Bobbies and strange, wavering buildings across the street.

"Who 'd ever thought I 'd care 's much as that?" and Tom, more than half ashamed, wiped his eyes on the top of Bobby's head.

After the children were asleep Mrs. Bower went with Tom into the store and admired his new arrangements.

"Where do you get your stock?" asked Tom.

"We get it from the best place there is. I got Robert to do that. It 's the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co."

"Have you got anything to buy more with?"

"Yes; Robert had enough to pay next month's rent and renew the stock, and that 's all."

"That 's enough. We 're going to make money now. Did you ever buy the things?"

"No; I 'm afraid I 'd buy foolish the first time."

"I think I could buy all right. I made a list of what we needed."

Mrs. Bower looked relieved. To leave Bobby for so long, especially as she wanted to go to the hospital in the afternoon, seemed to be something she could n't do.

"I 'll give you the money he set out for the stock, and you start early to-morrow and do the best you can with it. I sha'n't blame you if you do n't get everything just right."

"Oh, I 'll do well," was the prompt and confident answer. "And I told some of the customers we were going to have an opening to-morrow afternoon,

and for everybody to come, and we 'll make it look good in here—swell, you know."

Tom's head buzzed all that night with successes in trade. He bought and sold and made money and rejoiced.

The Capital Wholesale Grocery establishment looked very grand to Tom the next morning, not because he was not familiar with the appearance of such buildings, but because he was going to do business there. He had washed his things the night before, and was gratified beyond expression in the morning to find that Mrs. Bower had ironed them.

He was wholly unused to ironed wearing-apparel, and he was keenly alive to the dignity of the situation.

He found the proper entrance and saw a man who seemed to him to be a person high in authority.

"I come from Bower's store," said Tom, as impressively as possible, giving the address.

The clerk could scarcely suppress a smile, for he remembered Bower. They made a point of accurately placing all the store-keepers with whom they dealt and their representatives. He remembered the harassed, weak-looking man, with his pitiful list of groceries, the smallest order they had ever been asked to fill—a man with whom they would deal simply on a cash basis, as failure was written all over him.

"Have you cash?" he asked courteously.

"Oh, yes," smiled Tom, almost forgetting his dignity; then he added confidentially, "You know all about this business, do you?"

"Certainly."

"I mean you know how small stores buy, and where Bower's store is? People buy ten cents' worth."

"Yes; I know."

"I'm glad of that," moving still closer. "Now I never bought before. I know what we want, and I've got a list, but if you know the ropes I'd rather feel as though you'd help me buy right, and not let me make a fool of myself, than I would to try to be so everlastin' sharp and smart myself."

A gleam of amusement shone in the man's eyes. He clapped his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"All right, my boy. You may place the most implicit confidence in my judgment. Now, then, for your list. All right, sir. Regular round—tea, coffee, sugar, flour, raisins, crackers, rice, cornmeal, starch, soap. And you've got it divided all up; and that's the amount you're to spend, is it? It does n't take it all."

"I wanted to have some left over, so if you had anything that would sell off quick, that was cheaper than usual, I could buy some for a draw."

"I see. We will discuss the matter."

"And if there's pictures and things go with anything I buy, I want 'em, to make the store look pretty."

"It shall be remembered."

"You 're mighty polite," said Tom, admiringly.

"Undoubtedly."

"We want to have an opening this afternoon," said Tom, hastily seized with a sudden fear lest his things could not be delivered until the next day.

"You 're in plenty of time," was the grave reply. "Your things shall be delivered by 11:30."

They had moved into a room given over to canned things and glass jars of pickles.

"Now, if I may make a suggestion, the stores in your and similar districts invariably do a big business in pickles, and tinned meats, and canned goods. If you will permit me to make a selection of such things as will sell most readily and leave you the largest profit, and cut down some of your flour, which you will sell very little of now, you will make a good thing of it."

Tom had been hankering desperately to have some such things in the window and acquiesced with zeal.

He raised his eyes to look down the room and glanced through an open door to an office-like room beyond. A gentleman stood there in the full light marking in a note-book.

Tom's eyes were riveted on the gentleman's face. There he was—the man he had roused from sleep in his own room; the man from whom he had run away to find Reddy. He had promised that he would go

back, and he would go back, but not till Reddy was safe. Everything might explode around him now. Perhaps he was a sort of burglar himself, or perhaps the gentleman thought so, and if he saw him and kept him—Reddy and Mrs. Bower and all! He felt weak all over.

"Who is he?" he asked, feeling as though his voice must sound queer.

The clerk looked up. "That man? He is the owner of the whole concern, the grand mogul."

"Am I through now?" Tom hoped he was.

"I have been thinking of your draw—your bargain. We have something in gingersnaps that might prove profitable."

"And I want an extra lot of small paper bags and string, too."

Finally the order was all filled out, the bill paid and receipted, and Tom was away without having seen his midnight acquaintance closer, or having been seen by him.

"I don't like to feel that way," Tom thought impatiently. "Just as soon as Reddy can take care of himself and can get off, I'm going to see him and tell him why I ran. It makes me *mad!*"

Mrs. Bower waited for Tom with some trepidation. After he had gone she began to think she was very foolish to entrust the spending of their whole fortune to a twelve-year-old boy. She even had fleeting fears that he might disappear entirely, money and all. But

of those she was ashamed. She was watching for him by the store door when he returned, and at the sight of his resolute, honest-looking face her doubts disappeared.

"How did you get along?" she asked eagerly.

"First-rate. You 'll be delighted. Do n't seem 's though I could wait for the things to come."

He did not have to wait long. Inside of ten minutes up rattled the imposing wagon of the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co., drawn by two Clydesdale horses, and Tom's purchases were unloaded with respect and landed in the store. Daisy stood staring, open-eyed and excited, and even Bobby staggered through the door to his mother to see what was going on.

Tom ripped the cover off one box in a hurry and found the top packed with his paper bags; under them lay a great quantity of pink and white strings, and blue and white and green tissue paper.

"Oh!" exclaimed everybody; Bobby and Daisy with unqualified delight, Tom with astonishment, and Mrs. Bower with a sinking fear lest all the purchases might be of that description. There was a note pinned to the tissue. It read:

R. M. BOWER'S AGENT.

Dear Sir:—Please accept accompanying decorations for your establishment. Our firm will be glad to retain your custom and hope to be able to serve you with satisfaction.

Very respectfully,

THE CAPITAL WHOLESALE GROCERY CO.

Mrs. Bower read it with a bewildered expression when Tom handed it to her. This was courtesy indeed.

"It's a present! *Won't* we fix, though!" burst out Tom. "And here are the pictures I spoke for." He drew out one after another of the very prettiest advertising panels printed,—pictures of things he had not bought, or thought of buying. Bobby clapped his hands and laughed and was so happy that his mother grabbed him, pressed him close to her, and proceeded to burst into tears.

"Why, what ever is the matter?" asked Tom, greatly distressed.

"Nothing but foolishness," half sobbed Mrs. Bower; "but I've hardly ever seen 'em happy, we've had such hard times, and we've been so gloomy, and when I saw how happy he could be, I could n't stand it."

"Do n't that beat all!" said Tom meditatively. "I should have thought you would have laughed. If you'd just let my Friend live with you and help things along you would feel cheerful all the time, even when things looked black."

"You do n't mean Reddy?" in surprise.

"Oh, not Reddy," laughing. "Jesus Christ, his name is."

Mrs. Bower looked at him, speechless for a moment. "What ever do you mean?"

"I mean he came to the earth to show the people

how to live." He sat back on the floor looking earnestly at Mrs. Bower, while Daisy and Bobby gazed wonderingly at the pictures. "After he did what he had to do, and left the earth, he is a friend to every one that loves him and wants him—a close stay-with-you friend, I mean, one that counts for more than anything else beside."

"I was brought up myself to go to church and say my prayers and read my Bible," said Mrs. Bower slowly, "but it seemed to be for folks that got along well, and prospered, and had time for such things; and we had such a hard time I let it all slip. What do you mean by he 's your friend?"

"He 's my Friend." Tom flushed slightly.

"I strictly believe it," said Mrs. Bower quietly. "I might have known it was n't just ordinary boy-nature to be all you 've been to me."

Tom was taken up with his unpacking again. The box had the pickles and canned things in it, and Tom glowed with pride as he got them out.

Mrs. Bower was doubtful. Robert never bought those things. He said they were too fine.

"You 'll see," was the confident answer. "They 'll sell like fun. We 've got the other things, too. I got a heap for the money. Let 's get up our trimmings and pictures and put some of this tissue on the shelves before we unpack, and then we can hustle right ahead."

With hammer and tacks and the ladder Tom fes-

tooned the window, while the children hopped up and down with delight; the pictures were put up to the best advantage, the clean papers were put on the shelves, and the change from the gloomy, dirty little store to the bright, clean, festive place of Tom's machinations was miraculous.

"Tom, you do beat all! It's beautiful," ejaculated Mrs. Bower. "What would Robert say?"

Then the window was fixed with the two pies and two cakes Mrs. Bower had bought, pyramids of pickle-jars and tinned things, the box of fresh raisins, temptingly displayed, and the half-dozen lemons. The other boxes were unpacked, and when Tom had weighed out half his stock into ten-cent packages all ready to hand over to the customers, he felt as though a long advance on old methods had been made.

Already children were swarming in front of the window, attracted by the novel delicacies. The candy jars shone and were filled with delicious-looking confections in all colors, and there were two delectable piles of gingersnaps marked five cents a pound.

"They'd ought to sell for more," said Mrs. Bower.

"No; that's our draw. They'll all be gone this afternoon, you see, and we'll make a good profit on them, too."

"You're working so hard I'll get us all something

to eat that'll be tasty; you see." And she bustled in the direction of her cook-stove with more the air of the energetic girl she had once been than her husband would have believed possible.

"Maybe it would have been better if I'd held on to my religion more," she thought, as she made her preparations. "Maybe it would have helped us bear up and keep spirit. But Robert not knowin' nor carin' much about such things, and my bein' sort of shy and diffident about it, and us havin' such hard times, and nothin' goin' right—well, well, maybe it ain't too late to begin again. The good Lord certainly was doing for me when he sent that blessed boy. His *Friend*! Bless him! I never had no such feeling as that. But he's his friend if he's friend to any one, I'm thinkin'!"

After dinner Mrs. Bower put on what of elegance she possessed, also a clean dress on each of the children, and sat down peacefully in her back room to await developments. Tom took up Reddy's dinner and gave him all the attention he could, running on in an excited way about the store and how well it looked and how much he hoped they would sell. Reddy was enough better so that though weak all his natural impulsiveness and restlessness were in full sweep again.

"I'd like to see it," he said wistfully.

"I just wish you could."

"I believe I could be up just as well as not."

"It won't hurt your wound any, if you feel like it."

"Perhaps she would n't want me around."

Perhaps not. Tom would ask.

"Could Reddy sit down here a little, if he felt able to after he was up, Mrs. Bower? He could amuse Bobby real nice if you were busy, and I know you will be."

"Of course he can," was the cordial answer. "I 'll go tell him so."

Reddy's blue eyes, his boyish dependence of manner in his weakness, his quick responsiveness to every overture, had enlisted Mrs. Bower's sympathy. It was so long since she had had any interest or sympathy for any one outside her own little hard-pressed circle that this new element aroused her keenly.

"I 'll be glad to have you come down, Reddy. I washed and ironed your shirt for you, and you 'll like it."

Reddy flushed and smiled.

"You 're good," he said simply.

So he sat down in the back room and saw all the beauties of the store.

Tom had printed some placards and stuck them up outside, bearing legends: "GRAND OPENING," "EVERYBODY WELCOME," "PRICES TO SUIT ALL," "CHOICE GOODS," "LOW PRICES."

These signs had made quite a stir in the neighborhood. People were going to turn out. It was actually exciting. A bevy of women came first, not

in loose gowns and Mother Hubbard wrappers and dirty aprons and unadorned necks, but in up-town array, chatting and curious and interested. The store was full and children waited impatiently, pressing their noses against the window, fearful lest everything would be gone before their turn came. Everybody bought things. And nearly every one wanted to secure something "a bit fancy," a relish, a little jar or can of something. Every one praised the store. Mrs. Bower received compliments galore on her enterprise, on her appearance, on the cheapness and excellence of her goods, on Daisy's appearance, on everything. She smiled and her eyes brightened and she grew young in the success of it all. The reports spread fast and finally it seemed as though every house and even every room on the street had sent in a purchaser. The children spent their pennies without stint, and the gingersnaps, raisins, and candy grew beautifully less.

When it got to be so near supper time that trade dwindled and finally ceased, Tom looked at Mrs. Bower with an expressive gesture. She followed the motion of his hand. The half of their ordinary commodities that Tom had done up in small packages to expedite matters was almost entirely gone. Not a canned treasure remained of any description. The baker's wares had vanished. The six lemons were no more. They could have sold more of all their fancy groceries, if they had had them to sell.

"I never in all my life!" said Mrs. Bower, solemnly.

"Nor I never!"

"Nor I never," came in a faint, amused voice from the back room.

"Nor *I* never!" piped up Daisy, seized with the spirit of emulation.

"I was expecting to go to the hospital to-day, but I'll be glad to have this to tell Robert when I do go." Mrs. Bower felt a twinge of pity as she thought of it. Robert had never had any such success. He had waited with weary eyes for the fewest of customers.

When she went to the hospital last he had looked at her with burning, questioning eyes, and said, not bitterly, but hopelessly, "How bright you look, Mollie,—so different. It's me pulls you down so. I ought to have broken my neck instead of my leg."

"What's the matter?" asked Tom, noticing her change of expression.

"Oh, it's Robert!" cried she, impelled to speak. It had been pent up so long. "He's so discouraged and he never gets along, and everything he touches comes to nothing. He isn't like other men."

"Does he drink?" asked Tom. That was what ailed men he knew who could n't get along.

"No," too sad to be indignant. "You don't know how good he is. I don't appreciate it. He never touched a drop. He don't smoke, he never

goes anywhere nor has anything; he saves everything for me and the children; when we 'd be so awful behind sometimes he 'd pretend he could n't eat, when he was starving. He 's so patient, and he tries everything, and he is n't very strong, and he 's so—so easy touched, and so ready to think he 's looked down on, and so sure he 's no good, and he never has made a livin', and I was brought up to things comfortable and so was he, and we just went down and down. We had another boy next Daisy, Willie, and I never saw anybody love anything as he loved him. He just dreamed of him nights, and he worked so hard, hoping to get forehanded so Willie could have things. And he 'd carry him and carry him, and keep him with him every minute, and his first thought was Willie. One day when he was pretty near two years old Robert dropped him—dropped him in a queer, awful way so he struck on the back of his head, and Willie was stupid for days, and Robert pretty near went crazy. Oh, what I did live through!" wringing her hands at the thought of it. "And when Willie came around he was n't bright any more—just moaned for me, and he did n't know his father, and turned from him—oh, I can't tell about it!—and he lived two months that way, and died. And I was glad he died. I could n't stand the misery of seeing Robert look at him—and it was such a cheap little box he was buried in—all Robert could get. And he held that box every

minute until it was put in the grave; just staring at that little dead face. And it seems as though he 's never got out of it. He went on, but in such a dead, hopeless way. And Bobby—he loves Bobby and looks at him, but he 's never lifted him nor held him once. He 's afraid to, I guess. But I 've been awful weak and sick times back, and it seemed as though I could n't stand it sometimes not to get a mite of help about Bobby, but I did n't know what to do. You poor child, I did n't ought to have told you all that," for Tom was standing by the counter, near the stool Mrs. Bower was sitting on, and his lips were quivering and big tears stood in his eyes threatening to roll down.

"Jesus could have helped him. He 's just the kind Jesus could help more than any other. Why did n't you tell him?"

She looked at Tom a long time. "I did n't understand it as you do. I do n't believe, except to say to myself sometimes 'God help me,' that I ever thought of help from anywhere once—not once."

When they went into the back room Tom was sure he saw Reddy's shoulders shake. Reddy was lying on the sofa, face to the back. Tom spoke to him, but Reddy did n't answer.

"Poor lad, he 's asleep. Do n't wake him," said Mrs. Bower, gently.

"No asleep about that," thought Tom. "He heard her," and his whole heart cried out, "Help that man!

You can; don't you ache to do it? Oh, how you must have wearied to have him know how ready you were! Let me help you, let me let him know about you; help me help you just once!"

CHAPTER XI

THE KRAFS

John ran down the street toward Mother Lide's stand as fast as he could go. He was thin and pale from the intense heat and the close air of the streets and of their tenement, but he had not been sick and his face was quite a happy little face.

"Mother Lide," he cried, "what do you think? Guess! You never can!"

"No, then, I'm thinkin' I never can. You'll have to be tellin' me!"

"It's a letter, a letter for you! I had to come tell you. I couldn't bring it, because Kathie wouldn't let go. It's almost time for you to go home."

"How's Kathie feelin' the day, Johnnie?"

"She didn't feel very well until the letter came. Now she's bright as a dollar."

Kathie was still as bright as a dollar when they reached her. She was holding the letter as though it might accidentally get away from her.

"Oh, grannie, quick! open it quick!"

"And who do you think wrote it?" asked Mother Lide, looking at the envelope curiously.

"Why, Tom!" exclaimed both the children at once.

The old woman's face fell. She had thought perhaps she had heard from Billy at last. However, if it was Tom she would be glad to hear from him. She could not read herself, but she opened the letter carefully and handed it to John.

And John slowly read:

DEAR MOTHER LIDE AND KATHIE AND JOHN:

If I had thought of writing a letter before I would have done it, but I did n't think of it until to-day. How is Kathie? I have thought of you all all the time. The night I went for the doctor two men grabbed me for seeing them do something, and brought me here. Mother Lide, one of the men was your boy Billy He was going to do more things but he got shot a little, easy, and he has been sick, but I have taken care of him and he 's all right now. I hope he won't be bad any more. I do n't know sure, but I think he 's sick of burgling. I like him. I mean to stick right to him for you and Kathie. I think he will be a good man. He do n't know I 'm writing to you and I sha' n't tell him, for he acts ashamed, but you need n't worry while I am with him.

John, I have lots to tell you. You are the best boy I know. How are Jim and Dan and all the fellows? Kathie, I want to see you. How are the plants? I dream of you all at night. I shall be home soon, when I can get Billy to come. We call him Reddy.

Good-by,

TOM.

Mother Lide sat in a rocking-chair, her apron thrown over her head, her face in her hands, rocking to and fro.

"Grannie, grannie, what's the matter?" cried Kathie, after she had recovered sufficiently from the first ecstacy of hearing the letter to notice her grandmother.

"It's a glad and a sad woman I am!" half sobbed the old woman. "I must be by myself the while and take you no notice till I bid you."

She turned her chair toward the bed and sat there. After a moment's awed pause John read the letter again and again. It seemed as though Kathie could not tire of it. Finally, she stretched out her thin, little blue-veined hand and took the letter; she held it before her with the air of a connoisseur; her reddish curls burned in the red glow from the western sky, her pale, bright little face was all alive with interest and fun. She began to read the letter herself from memory; when she slipped up on a word John set her right.

"Did you ever hear such a good letter, John?"

"Never."

It was the first letter for either of them.

"It's written with a pencil on wrapping paper. He cut it with the scissors."

"It's just addressed to Mother Lide, but as long as the street and number are all right of course she got it. I guess he did n't know any other name. I do n't."

"I know it," said Kathie; "it's Lidedell. Can't you answer it right off?"

"We have n't got any paper nor any pencil nor any envelope, but I 'll get some to-morrow if I get a baby to mind or an errand."

They talked on until the light had nearly faded. Then Mother Lide rose and came forward. The round, faded old face was smiling again.

"Faith, childer, it 's a glad woman I am! I 'll not be ungrateful! Tom 's a blessed bit of a boy, and the Lord 'll repay him."

"Tom won't want no pay," said John, quickly.

"He 's a good boy; and you 're another, Johnnie. I used to think Tom was cut out for the gallows, but he 's took a turn."

Then she got their supper and the children looked at all the plants again before they went to bed. The slips all grew but one, and that one caused Kathie many very salt tears. The seeds came up beautifully, and Dr. Gray affirmed that Kathie's interest in her plants kept her alive through the heat.

The next day, toiling up the tenement-house stairs to Kathie, came a very welcome visitor, Frau Kraf. It was the first time she had been there since she moved, and though Kathie had great faith that Frau Kraf would come, John and Mother Lide had little expectation of it.

"Mein goot leetle maid. Ich glat, ver' glat zu see again. Ich kom," she cried out, embracing Kathie and weeping over her in true German fashion. "You so—so vat you say?—vite! Hanschen look for

you," and the old dame kept caressing her and exclaiming, while Kathie was beatifically happy to see her.

Frau Kraf had come on an errand which she explained with the greatest difficulty, and had it not been that John turned up she probably could not have righted matters. She had come to say that they all wanted Kathie to come and stay a week at their house; that they had a cot-bed for her; and that they had a porch and a chair for her, and that the son had made a hammock of barrel-staves, and that it hung under a cherry tree and an apple tree, and that with a thick quilt and a pillow in it it would be comfortable for Kathie.

Further, she could not come such a long distance twice, and if Kathie could get to the car Frau Kraf would take care of her and it would take them right to their door that very day

Kathie gave little shrieks of joy. John, as soon as he understood the drift of the matter, ran for Mother Lide, and so great was Mother Lide's pleasure at the thought of helping get Kathie out near a tree for a week, that she broke up her stand at once and went home to see what she could do about it.

A basket was packed with Kathie's poor little worn clothes, her hair was tenderly brushed, and the clean little checked apron slipped on to make her nice for her car ride; a handkerchief was tied

over her bright curls, for she had no hat, and her very happiness almost brought tears to the eyes of Mother Lide and Frau Kraf. John was too happy himself in her joy to feel anything but glad. He secured Jim's cart from Jim's mother. They carried her carefully down, and she rode the six blocks to the car so smilingly contented that hardly any one could pass her without turning to look at her.

"O John, I wish Emily could go; she never had such a good time as this."

"Perhaps she did after the story stopped."

"Perhaps," assented Kathie. "I think Emily would have thanked God right away, and I did n't."

"It is thanking him to be so glad about it," said John.

"Oh, how nice! You do know so much, John!"

The car came and they lifted Kathie in beside Frau Kraf, and Frau Kraf, kindly and clean in her white neck-kerchief and great gingham apron, smiled at every one in the car as though to explain that it was a great day for the little Kathie, and Kathie waved her hands frantically to Mother Lide and John as the car started along.

She had never had a car ride before, and when, after blocks and blocks of great city buildings, they came to smaller and quieter streets and then on to where there were hardly any stores but just rows of small brick houses, and then detached houses, and then little places with yards and trees, and finally a

little house tucked away among vines and trees with great brilliant hollyhocks looking over the fence, and Gretchen Kraf by the gate holding a very clean little Hans, Kathie sighed aloud in despair of ever expressing her joy. The conductor patted her on the head as he very gently lifted her out, and she rode in Hans' wagon right up to the porch, and they put her in such an easy chair, and Gretchen Kraf gave her a drink of milk and a cake.

Kathie was a very exhausted little girl, indeed, but when they found how anxious she was to see the hammock under the cherry tree and the apple tree they took her out there and in a very few minutes the long, dark lashes were lying on the pale cheeks, and the little girl was having her first sleep outside of a city tenement.

When John and Mother Lide turned from the spot where they had stood to watch Kathie's waving hands, John found that the exhilaration of the episode had entirely disappeared. The tenement without Tom or Kathie would be gloomy enough. Then he thought it must be worse for Mother Lide, and he slipped his hand inside hers. He had always been so reticent and undemonstrative that Mother Lide, with all her impulsiveness, was touched.

"You 're a kind boy, Johnnie darlin'. You 'll save me a lonesome ache this week, you will."

"Say, Mother Lide, I wish Kathie had a hat."

"Faith, an' I was thinkin' that same. She 's niver

had a hat, and it's a shame to her to be ridin' in the car with no hat."

"I'm goin' down town and look in all the sales, and see what I can get a hat for. I'll buy it if I can, and give it to Kraf on his car to take out, and then she can come home in it, anyway."

"You've a big head. For a bye to plan I've never seen the likes of you. Now do that same."

That was why John went around gazing in store windows at hats. Hats were cheap, but he wanted to see what there was to be seen. Finally, in one of the big department stores, he saw a whole window full of white and of black flat hats; very pretty indeed he thought they were, just what he had imagined he would like Kathie to have. And great cards announced "Only ten cents! Flats, reduced from thirty-nine cents!"

Ten cents! Well, that was easy; but it would have to have something on it. He pushed on in through the crowd, traversing the length of the floor before he found the stairway, through all the smells of perfumery, fresh candy, rubber goods, Japanese wares, and a general hot closeness composed of everything. When he found the hats he also found a very fresh, pretty-looking clerk at leisure.

It was a shy voice she heard saying, "Have you got anything pretty—real pretty—you could put on one of those ten-cent white flats that would n't make it cost very much?"

"Bless me, do you want to wear a flat?" she asked, laughing.

He smiled as he said, "I want one, but it's for a little girl. Have you?"

"Why, now, the cheapest pretty thing you could put on would be ribbon. We've got a big thing in ribbon to-day. Do you see that basket over there? Well, those ribbons are only three cents a yard, and they're wide, too. Come and see."

She held up a very pretty blue ribbon, and John's eyes opened wide with delight. It was immaterial to him that very few of the threads were silk, and that the ribbon was of a gauzier texture than would ordinarily have been considered desirable. It was a pretty color, he could see that.

"Three yards would make three lovely rosettes and a cent left for an elastic. You'd get a sweet, pretty hat for twenty cents."

"Oh, I'll do it! I know I can get twenty cents," and John's eyes shone.

"Haven't you got the money?"

"No, I came in to see; but I'm sure I can get it."

"Well, if you come in wait for me to wait on you and if I've got time I'll fix it for you, unless you've got somebody at home to do it."

"Oh, I'll be so glad!" and he went away radiant. He had five cents, he earned five more, and Mother Lide gave him ten, and the next noon while custom

was slack he found the pretty girl ready to wait on him.

"You have the money, have you?"

"Twenty cents," and he handed it over to her.

She got the hat and the ribbon, deftly twisted up the ribbon and pinned it on, took a threaded needle from her dress, where she had put it expressly in expectation of this trade, and sewed on the elastic.

"There! Pretty? Hasn't taken a minute either. And all for twenty cents! Oh, you need n't thank me. You 're nicer than most boys."

She put the hat in a large paper bag, and John went smiling away, sure he would never forget that nice clerk if he lived forever.

He could n't help thinking, as he ran along toward Mother Lide, how much more friendly everybody seemed. He was really beginning to like people, and to like to have dealings with people. He knew why. He knew how things had gradually changed for him since Tom told him about Jesus Christ; how he had grown to feel that with Jesus to care for him, as he did for Emily's family, life could never again seem so desolate.

John showed the hat to Mother Lide at the stand, and the childlike old woman was lavish of her praise.

"It 's an angel she 'll look like entirely. Blue 's the color for the child. Oh, Johnnie, it 's a wonderful hand you are to pick out hats! I 'll be thinking

I'll have a new one meself!" and she gave a pat to the dismal black bonnet she had worn for ten years.

"I don't know which Kraf's car is, Mother Lide, and I'll just have to go and wait, I guess."

"All right, Johnnie, and I'll not be tellin' you not to get into any mischief."

After he had waited a long time he asked a motorman of that line when Kraf would come, and was told that Kraf would leave there next at 5.10. When the car came, John swung up in the steps beside him.

"Can you take this out to Kathie? It's a hat for her to wear home."

The good-hearted German smiled.

"De leedle child vill shust have too much shoy mit ein hat! Das ist gut! Aber, besser, you ride out mit me and gif it to her. She like to see John. Hans like to see John. Die mutter and all like to see John. Kom!"

"I haven't any money," was the regretful answer.

"Mein friend; you ride right here all right; gut. You sleep out door oder on porch, gut genug. Kom in morning mit me; gut." He was jangling his bell, and John had all the bliss of feeling the car thrill under him as it started on its swift glide along the track. Wouldn't Kathie be surprised! Wouldn't she like the hat! Kraf was a brick, that was what he was. What would Tom say?

Little Hans was the first one to see John get off

the car, and his joyful demonstrations attracted his mother's attention to John.

"He made me come, Mr. Kraf did," said John apologetically. "He said I could bring Kathie's hat myself."

And there was Frau Kraf the mother, and they hurried him through the house, and Kathie, sitting in a barrel-chair under the apple tree, screamed with joy at the sight of him.

"Oh, John! How happy I am! Oh, John!"

Then they all waited while John drew out the hat to show Kathie. She clasped her hands and gazed in breathless admiration. Hans tried to grasp it, and Frau Gretchen and Frau Kraf praised it in German, and then put it on Kathie. And when the happy blue eyes looked out from under the broad brim, and the pale cheeks were flushed pink with excitement, and the reddish-brown curls tumbled every which way from under the white brim, John thought he had never seen anybody so pretty in his life, not even the pretty clerk.

"Oh, John, if only Emily and Tom and you and Grannie could have hats like this! Do you think Emily ever had a hat like this?"

"After the story ended I think she did."

"And I know she thanked God right away. Thank you, God, for my hat."

"Das ist recht," said Frau Kraf approvingly. "Gott sei Dank."

John slept on the porch and the next morning went back on Kraf's second trip. It had been a time of unprecedented diversion, and John was so full of talk about it to Mother Lide that she exclaimed over and over again:

"Hear the boy talk! I'd never be thinkin' he could rattle like that." But she was ready to hear it all as often as he could tell it, for the thought of her little pale Kathie sitting under a cherry tree and an apple tree, with some one to heed her all day long, was almost too good to be true.

It was a long week, but the plants all throve and John got some new pictures to put upon the walls, and when Kathie rode up from the car in the box wagon, with her new hat on, the whole tenement turned out to welcome and admire.

CHAPTER XII

A SERVICE

When Tom had to return so soon to The Capital Wholesale Grocery Co. to renew his goods, depleted by the opening, he did not go in so light-hearted a manner as before. He was afraid that he could not avoid meeting the owner of the establishment, and then what dreadful things would be in store for him he did not know.

He saw the same clerk who had attended him before. The clerk looked at him with some suspicion. He had a half wish that he had not been so cordial before if the boy was going to trespass.

"What's the matter?" he asked rather shortly. "Anything wrong with the goods?"

"No; everything was right. We sold out too fast. Here is the list and the money. Will that be all right? I can't stop."

The clerk regained his amiability, and asked him to see some new goods, but Tom declined and got away as fast as he could.

"I hurt his feelings at first, I guess," meditated the clerk.

"Who was that?" asked the owner, stepping into the room. "Who was talking in here?"

"A boy—Bower's agent."

"Oh!" in a puzzled way. "It sounded like a boy I'm looking for."

"I'll catch him and bring him to you next time he comes, if you like, sir."

"Well, no matter; just a mistake on my part, I suppose."

Reddy was well enough to be up and out, but he was unfit for any steady work. He was restless. He could n't bear to be doing absolutely nothing, and he missed the excitements and uncertainties he had so long been accustomed to.

"I wish I knew where Brown is," he said one day.

Tom felt a cold chill.

"He 'll grow so uneasy he'll get into another scrape, and Doctor Rogers sayin' only yesterday that if he did anything rash, or drank, or overworked, or got cold, he 'd be down sicker than he was before. What can he do? If only John was here he'd think of something. A boy that spends all his time just thinking can get up ideas."

That evening Mrs. Bower resolved on making some gingerbread. She said she used to make the best gingerbread that could be made. Reddy sat rather gloomily and watched her operations. His face softened as he thought of something that happened when he was a little boy. Tom was watching

as eagerly as Daisy and Bobby. There were no customers and he had never seen gingerbread made.

"I used to cook up things when I was a little shaver," said Reddy, suddenly.

"Did you?" asked Tom, in surprise.

"Yes, I did a thrivin' business for a while. I made molasses candy—good, I can tell you—and made it in different sized sticks and wrapped 'em in buttered tissue. Cent a stick, most of 'em. Some I pulled white and twisted, but most folks liked the straight, black molasses sticks—thought it had n't been handled so much, I guess."

"Where did you sell?"

"Down at mother's stand," looking at Tom, but flushing. It was the first time he had ever really admitted that he was Mother Lide's son.

"Do you remember how to make it?"

"Of course."

"See here, you make some to sell in the store, and, say, Mrs. Bower, if this gingerbread 's good, you make some slabs of gingerbread, and we 'll advertise it and it will sell like anything."

"I just believe it will," was Mrs. Bower's enthusiastic reply. "I can make it enough sight better than that baker's trash."

Reddy began to be interested. "If you 'll let me have some molasses for myself for making a batch of candy for the store, I 'll take it down by the trans-

fer or post-office, or some place, on a tray, and see if I can sell some. I could sell gingerbread, too, maybe, if I got any start."

Tom slapped his hand on his trouser leg.

"Good enough! Begin to-morrow, will you?"

The plans of the evening were uncommonly vivacious and early the next morning Reddy was at work on his candy. He made a nice lot for the store first, all done up in very attractive style, and then he loaded up his tray—a board suspended by a strap from his shoulders. The board was neatly covered with clean wrapping paper, and his candy looked as temptingly eatable as could have been desired.

"Oh, yes," he said, in answer to Mrs. Bower's admiring questions; "people used to buy me out quick and they said it was because it looked so good."

Tom gave him many anxious injunctions to walk slow and keep out of the sun, and not stay too long, and to be sure and not go near a saloon.

"No; I won't drink anything while I'm here. I never cared anything about drinking liquor. Rather have something else any day."

But Tom doubted it.

Reddy was home by dinner time, sold out, tired, and very cheerful. He had found a good place, and had got a license, and was sure he could sell a good supply of both molasses candy and gingerbread.

Tom was not satisfied that Reddy was really on his feet again and was desperately anxious lest he should have a relapse.

"We 've got to be getting out of here," he thought. "Mrs. Bower says her husband will be back in two weeks. Of course Reddy do n't really earn his food here, anyway, and I do n't believe I any more than earn mine, and there won't be any need of me when Mr. Bower gets back. *You* tell me what to do."

A week before it had struck him that in all the time since he had seen Miss Roslyn he had never once done what she said, for she had told him that in any church or Sunday-school they could tell him about Jesus Christ, how he had lived on this earth, and what he had done. "And I 've never been once," he thought reproachfully. How could he have been so neglectful of knowing all he possibly could about his Friend?

"You 'll think I do n't care, and I *do* care!"

Then he resolved to go the very next Sunday, as Reddy certainly did not need him to nurse him. So Sunday morning early, as clean as he could make himself, but conscious that his sadly worn shirt and trousers presented anything but a fine appearance, he started out to pick out a church. His clothes led him at first to think he would choose a small, poor church, but he gave that up.

"No, sir; clothes or no clothes, I 'm going to the best there is going. No telling for sure about these

things, but it stands to reason that where they 've got the finest church they 've got the most money to spend educatin' their teachers and folks, and I 'll learn more for my money."

Having settled that matter to his satisfaction he wandered around, and by the time he had picked out a very handsome church to honor with his presence he had wasted so much time that Sunday-school was already in session. The sound of singing directed him and he entered a large Sunday-school room full of children and older people. He was quite dazzled by the sight of the white dresses, the fluttering ribbons of the most bewitching colors, the feathers, the curls, and the white collars and gorgeous neckties of the boys. It was a bewildering sight.

" My stars! the money for all that!" he thought.

He stood by the entrance as they sang the last song before the formation of classes, and at the close of the song the superintendent came down that way. He was walking with his hands behind him, meditating on what they could do to enlarge their Sunday-school membership and bring in outsiders. He almost stumbled over Tom.

" Why, why, my boy," he hesitated in his astonishment.

" I 've come to your Sunday-school," said Tom boldly.

" Delighted! Welcome! We 're glad to see you!"

But where should he put him? The best he

could imagine would be good-natured grins of amusement at the boy's clothes from any class of boys in which he could put him. So far as he knew, there had never been a bare-footed boy inside the school before.

"More shame to us!" he thought. "However, we've got a teacher that will do—and that's the main thing," and he led Tom to a class of boys about his own age.

"Miss Roslyn, a new boy," he said, and hastily retreated.

Miss Roslyn looked up with a smile into Tom's brown eyes. They gazed at each other speechless a moment while it seemed as though a little electrical current leaped from one to the other.

"*Tom!*" she said, holding out her hand.

"Miss Roslyn!" he smiled, promptly taking it.

"I'm so glad," she said heartily. "I'll ask questions later. Boys, this is a friend of mine from my old home and I'm *so* glad to see him!"

The boys were all awake to some sort of a mystery and smiled pleasantly enough at Tom. A fellow must have a pretty good time whose folks let him off to Sunday-school looking like that.

"We must go on with our lesson now," said Miss Roslyn, "and it's a very interesting one, too. We won't have any too much time."

The lesson was about King Joash, and it was interesting; the boys' attention never wavered once,

but the lesson was n't in the least what Tom thought it would be. " I 'll just have to ask her afterwards," he thought.

" I wonder if he 'll get away from me after Sunday-school," thought Miss Roslyn. She knew street boys were slippery. So when the other boys were filing out in order, when her class was called, she held on to Tom's arm.

" I want to talk to you," she said, smiling.

She led him to a little room which was unoccupied just then, the map room, and getting him well cornered in a comfortable chair she sat down in front of him.

" Now, Tom, tell me all about it. Where have you been? How did you get here? "

Tom looked at her a moment, hesitatingly, then said frankly enough, " I could tell you all about it, Miss Roslyn, but it would take a good while, and it would n't do you a bit of good nor me either, and I just came in for one thing, just one thing, and I was n't sure it would do a bit of good to come, but now you are exactly the one to tell me. There is n't much time you can give me, I suppose, Miss Roslyn. I want you to tell me about"— he leaned forward, his eyes speaking more eloquently than his voice— " I want you to tell me about Jesus Christ, all you can."

She felt as though her heart stood still a moment. She was n't expecting it. She had put more of herself into the words she had spoken to him that other

day than she had ever done for any one else before, and she had thought of it often, always convinced of a strange disproportion between what she had felt at the time and the effect it must have had on her listener. He must have forgotten it on leaving the house. Why had she been so earnest?

Again the same intense desire to show him Jesus as she half consciously dreamed of him came to her.

"I will, Tom. I will tell you all I can, but you must remember that I can only tell you my little view of him, can only tell you the way his life, his wonderful love, the beauty of it all, seem to me. Do n't forget, if I fail, that that is not all there is to it. Others can tell you more and better, and by studying his words and life yourself, you will, with his help, know him best of all.

"But what I can, I will tell you. We will not try to talk now of why Jesus, the Son of God, Creator himself, Lord of all, should, through love of us, offer himself a sacrifice for sin. We will only try to talk of him as he lived on earth, as we know of him from the gospels.

"We know this. Jesus was born on this earth, as other children are born, nearly two thousand years ago, in a country far away from here, called Palestine. Look, Tom," and she rapidly rolled down great sheets from a wall-roll, reproductions from photographs.

"This is Bethlehem of Judæa, the place where he

was born. You will read of it yourself, and any one can tell you of the Christ-child laid in a manger in a stable on Christmas night. That is why we keep Christmas; it is Christ's birthday. The angels sang in heaven, the lowliest shepherds came rejoicing, and wise kings from distant lands brought gifts. But, Tom, it was only the few. Can you understand that? Only a few then, and always, with open hearts to know the coming of our Lord.

"King Herod, the king of that country, tried to kill him, but that could not be. Jesus had come for another death than that. An angel told Joseph and Mary to take the little Jesus away. And they did."

She unrolled a copy of Hoffman's "Flight into Egypt" and beside it a Holy Family of Müller's. Tom scarcely suppressed a cry of admiration. He was not used to pictures. The lovely face of the child thrilled him. It seemed like really knowing more of his Friend.

"Oh, Tom, why can't I tell you better? I feel so helpless!" Tears stood in Laramie's eyes and she made a gesture of despair. "I feel the beauty of it so, and I can't tell it. See, this is a picture of Nazareth, another town. That is the town where they took the little Jesus when they returned from Egypt. That is where he lived all through his boyhood. Do you see it? Do you see the gray-green olive trees, the low stone walls, the flat-topped houses, the blue, blue sky, the warm mellow sunlight flooding it

all? Can't you see how it was in those long ago days? His eyes looked on all this. Do you see that boy up there alone, looking off over all this, dreaming, planning, how can we tell what—but a boy surely?"

There was no boy there, where Laramie pointed, but Tom saw his Friend and his heart yearned toward him.

"His home was simple, but it was the best home, a true home. Wasn't it happy where he was? There were other little children there, though many do not believe that, but I know it; and was there ever such a tender, loving, helpful brother as he was? Here, Tom, see," unrolling another picture; "along this road he walked with his people to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. Do you see the rising hill, the level winding road, the rolling ground on this side? He saw it all. It was the best boy life ever lived, the truest, the bravest, the purest. He grew up, becoming more fitted each day for his three years of work. And when that three years came and the work began, was there ever such strength, such endurance, such steadfast courage, such perfect self-control?

"His work was the hardest sort of work. It was teaching us to live the way we *are*. He did what was just before him. He chose for his disciples the men right under his hand, those nearest to him. He spent his time teaching and healing and helping those around him just as they came to him, the sick,

the poor, the needy, the wretched, the wrong-doers. He taught the simplest truths, the plainest paths, and yet, Tom,—can you understand?—still only the few could receive them, only the few could heed and know him as he was. And are n't you sure that they were the happy ones of earth? I am.

"And all the time that he worked and taught, the factious ones, the carping, jealous ones, the powerful ones of that little country were combining against him, were plotting, planning against him."

"Why?" burst out Tom.

"Why? What is easier to believe or harder to explain? Is n't it so now? How much more so then? Jesus was infinitely great! Would n't you have said, 'Crush them, ruin their plans, spoil their plots?' But he, when he was ready, when he had taught his people all that they could receive, when his disciples needed his presence in the spirit more than his presence in the body, then, bravely, quietly, he faced the doom his enemies had prepared, and that he was fully ready to accept.

"No, Tom, dear; I shall not try to tell you all that. You must read it. You will know all about it, the agony in the garden, the desertion by all his friends, the tribunal, the condemnation, the crucifixion—that was their capital punishment in those days—the crying out of the very earth at the horror of it, the despair and gloom of his disciples, the burial in the tomb, the resurrection on the third day as he had promised, his

presence for a while longer to reassure and appeal to the earthly sense of his poor followers, the final leaving of earth as a bodily presence, and his mission to all as Friend, Comforter, Strength. For, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'"

She had spoken very rapidly, in a low, eager tone, Tom's eyes rarely leaving hers, his breath coming faster at times, his cheek flushing or paling. He did not understand all she said. He would remember very little, perhaps. But his horizon was immeasurably widened.

Laramie stopped; a strangely beautiful sound reached them—a clear, melodious note.

"Come," she said softly, and taking his hand she led him from the little room, across the Sunday-school room, to one of the doorways where he could look right into the church. It was crowded. The waving of fans, the smell of faint, sweet perfumes and flowers, the soft air from the many open spaces, the subdued light filtering through memorial windows, the vanishing lines of the far-away roof with its dark beams, the something that expressed decorous attention among that great congregation—Tom felt it all in a vague way, but he was looking straight toward the choir, and listening, carried away out of himself by the sweetness of it, to the clear voice singing, every word clean-cut as a cameo.

"One there is above all others—above all others"—

Tom scarcely knew whether it was one voice or many that sang on.

"Well deserves the name of friend"—

Tom leaned forward; Laramie still held his arm.

"His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end."

And then again, many voices he thought, but still so faultlessly clear,

"His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end."

Tom's eyelashes were wet, and his lips were parted. Laramie was listening to it through his ears. "I never heard anything like that before," she thought, marveling. "I heard it just as he heard it, fresh, new, understanding it, believing it, adoring."

Tom had never heard a prayer before. When the minister, a very earnest man, and one who impressed every one as such, began the prayer, and the church became more hushed than before, the slight fluttering of fans alone making itself heard, Tom knew and understood. Every word stamped itself on his heart and something leaped within him and answered to the words of supplication:

"Give us, we pray thee, that sweet sense of thy protecting nearness, of thy comforting presence, that we may never be discouraged or cast down."

That was it. It had been vouchsafed to Tom. In spirit he prostrated himself before the infinite love,

the wonderful goodness of Him who came near him at all points, who in a very boy-life satisfied and understood and blessed his boy-nature. In a very outpouring his heart seemed to say, "I love You for it so. I know what you were. I know how it is all there in you—what you lived and did and suffered, and the glory of all heaven and earth in and through and behind you, and I love you so for coming to me just as you are—me. I could n't live without you now. I want to do the best way, like you live!"

Laramie drew him into a seat beside her after the prayer was over, and she heard the sermon and the singing as he heard it. It was a rarely strange experience. The eagerness, the absorption, the quick conception of what it all meant, the breathless attention. She never had attended a service like that. Was it any better than she heard Sunday after Sunday? She believed not. The obscure pew became consecrated ground. More than one boy sat there. A boy Jesus, as Tom knew him, was there. Reverently she bowed her head. Hot color flushed her face. It was true. A deepening sense of things as they were came to her. As though lifted a little higher, or able to see a little less dully, she realized the Christ-spirit, the present, yearning, loving One. And had it not always been so? And were there some who knew it? Happy they, as in days of old, and her heart bowed itself in shame and cried out, "God help me, God help me!" Could she be so

dull, so blind, again? Not quite the same, perhaps.

When the service was over and the smiling, elegant, quietly conversing audience melted away, Laramie and the oddly dressed little brown-eyed boy beside her attracted many a kindly glance.

"Can't you come home with me, Tom?"

"No'm; I must go back."

"Well, you must come to see me."

"Yes'm; thank you," shyly. "Good-bye," and he went, and Laramie realized that she didn't know where he was going, and that he couldn't possibly know where she lived, as it hadn't been mentioned.

She was unmitigatedly indignant at herself. She couldn't think how it ever happened, and was forced to content herself with the thought that he at least knew the church and would surely be there next Sunday. But the next Sunday Mrs. Bower decided to go to church herself for the first time in years, and asked Tom to take care of Bobby. Bobby was as willing to stay with Tom as with his mother, and Tom's satisfaction over Mrs. Bower's going back to a practice which he understood was customary with her when she, too, cared about the Lord Christ, made him very glad to keep Bobby, though he thought longingly of Laramie and her Sunday-school class.

CHAPTER XIII

AN ERRAND

Dr. Rogers came into the store snapping and unsnapping his watch as usual.

"Hey—Tom—here!" As Tom came up from back of the counter, he went on. "He's coming back to-morrow morning. He's well enough now. Have to be careful. Bower, I'm talking about. Stars! what a change you have made in this hole!" gazing around the store. "Would n't know it could be the same place! Is that Bobby?" as Bobby stuck his head up from behind the counter. "He looks pretty well. You all eat more of the right sort of food, I guess."

"Oh, she's the boss cook, I can tell you!" said Tom emphatically, so emphatically that Mrs. Bower, coming into the store from the back room at the sound of the doctor's voice, resolved to make a pot-pie for dinner that would make Tom's eyes stand out.

"How do you do, Mrs. Bower? You look pretty well made over yourself. Mr. Bower will be here to-morrow; just telling Tom. How fine it looks here. That boy was a godsend to you, Mrs. Bower!"

"Indeed he was. Bless him!" was the prompt answer, to Tom's confusion.

"You 'll have to cheer Mr. Bower up, Mrs. Bower. He 's the most downhearted man I ever saw. The store will brighten him, I guess. Tom," jokingly, "you better take some of these folderol trimmings and put them where he sleeps. We 're all mightily moved by what we see. Well, I 'm in a hurry. How 's Reddy? Out in the sun? He needs regular work of some sort, Tom. He 's a restless, unbalanced sort of a boy. He 'll be in mischief, or drinking, or sick, or something; shows all the signs. Good-bye."

Tom did n't feel any lighter-hearted for his visit. He was worried enough about Reddy as it was. The molasses candy was doing a fair business. There was quite a steady sale for it in the store, and the gingerbread went daily to the last crumb. Reddy sold enough each day to make him feel fairly independent. Another week of it would see him in somewhat better clothes, and he was paying lodging and board to Mrs. Bower. But Tom was sure Mr. Bower would not want Reddy there unless the board-money turned out to be an object, and, though Reddy was doing pretty well, it was n't a safe business by any means. Tom could n't feel sure that Reddy had not seen, or would not see, some of Brown's friends. There was every chance of it. As Reddy regained his normal strength, the molasses candy trade would certainly pall on him. Tom's dream that he could

take Reddy back to his mother could not be fulfilled, he knew, until Reddy wore good clothes, and was doing something creditable. That was Reddy's pride. Tom was sure that if Reddy felt that he could go back to his mother as a respectable member of society, he would go gladly, but that, as he was, nothing would persuade him to.

"I believe You put the idea in my head," thought Tom as an idea occurred to him. "If You will only stand by me I can do it. I will do it."

He knew but one person in the city who could, supposing him to be willing, help Reddy toward securing any steady work. That person was the proprietor of the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co., the man in whose room he had stood in the dead of night, sent in by a burglar, the man whose house Reddy had intended to burglarize. Would n't he have to tell that if he went to see that man? Would it lead to Reddy's arrest? That was the man whom he had promised to return to, the man from whom he had run, like a thief, the man he was afraid to see in his own store on legitimate business.

Tom flushed angrily at the thought.

"I 've got to go. I must see him. I 'll do the best I can and You help me!"

Should he go to the store or to the house? He had said he would go to the house and to the house he must go. The sooner the better. Perhaps the gen-

tleman went home at noon. He would try it. If not he would go at night.

A customer came in. Tom waited on the woman with the care which he always used and which was the cause of mothers' telling their children, when they sent them to the store, to wait until Tom could supply them.

"Mrs. Bower," he called, as he saw her pass the store door, "can you get along without me this noon?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs. Bower. "But you'll eat dinner first, won't you? It's good."

Tom smelled it and meditated that their twelve o'clock dinner would probably antedate the great man's nooning, and the enthusiasm of his expressed intention to remain to dinner cheered her heart. She did enjoy cooking and having Tom praise the result, and the children were beginning to imitate him and make much of her skill.

"If I can do what I want this noon and don't have to try again to-night, we can get your room all made mighty pretty, can't we, for Mr. Bower, like the doctor said?"

"What could we do?" doubtfully.

"Well, we could scrub it up good, and the windows—they keep things so slick at the hospital—and perhaps you could wash up the things on the bed."

"Yes; I planned to do that this afternoon."

"And perhaps we could put up some pictures, and

maybe those curtains could be made to look better. I think we could do a lot after we got to work."

"Perhaps we could," she admitted a little more cheerfully. "It 's a shame not to try when you 're so willing. We had such nice, pretty things when I was a girl, only I did n't think they were much then. We had white curtains and frames to the pictures, and glass in the bureau, and fancy things stuck around; when I think of it it do n't seem worth while to try."

"Now that 's queer. I should suppose it would keep you wanting to try all the time. I never knew anybody lived so nice as you used to."

As soon as Tom had finished his dinner he started off, very much uplifted by the good potpie he had been regaling himself on. It did n't seem quite so much of an ordeal to do his errand as it had seemed before dinner. However, he went more slowly as he reached the house.

It was a pleasant house. The trees in the tree-boxes in front cast a generous shade. It was a home-like, inhabited, friendly-looking house. Tom slowly mounted the steps, turning over in his mind the words he meant to say to whomsoever opened the door. He had decided to say, "Is the man that lives here at home now?"

He rang the bell. In a moment he heard some one opening the vestibule door and turning the knob of the door before him. His lips were open to make his inquiry, when a familiar, joyful voice exclaimed,

"Why, Tom, you dear, good boy! How did you ever find out I lived here? How lovely of you!" and there was Miss Laramie Roslyn.

Tom's pleasure at seeing her showed very plainly in his brown eyes and flushed cheeks, but he stammered out, "I did n't know you did live here. I came to see some one else."

"Some one else *here*!" she exclaimed, astonished. "Come right in. Whom do you want to see?"

"I do n't know his name. The man that owns the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co."

"Mr. David Roslyn, of course. He 's my uncle. We live here all together now. This is his house. Miss Roslyn, the lame one, is here, too. Come right in here," showing him into a small place apparently not meant for more than two or three to sit in, though it had ferns in it, and a carved marble, and there was a general cool effect of white and pale green and gold. It was too dainty and elegant a place for him, Tom thought, but he gritted his teeth and resolved not to flinch.

"Is he here—Mr. Roslyn?" asked Tom.

"What a boy you are to keep right at a thing! And here I am dying to talk to you! Yes, he 's here, and he will be at lunch soon, so I suppose you will have to see him now, if at all. You wait, dear."

She went out and in a moment returned. "You can come to the library. I suppose it is business, and I 'll have to keep out."

"Yes, it 's business," admitted Tom, feeling queer as he thought of the possibility of Mr. Roslyn's instantly recognizing him as a burglar while Miss Roslyn was still within hearing.

"There, Tom, do n't be worried," she said kindly. "I 'm not going in, but you simply *must* come here to see *me*. Do you understand? Not anybody else but me, and that very soon, too. Promise?"

"Yes; I will if—if—I am let come after Mr. Roslyn 's seen me."

"You are coming to see me. Do you understand? Here is the door." She opened it, pushed him in, closed it, and went up-stairs to her aunt, wondering much as she went.

Mr. Roslyn sat by the library table. He was leaning back in his chair, one arm resting on the table, which he was rapping in a musical way with a paper-cutter. He was a dignified, handsome man, and Tom knew before he entered the door just how the steady dark eyes would look him through, and just how the firm lips would close as they questioned him. Tom admired him intensely, and he felt chagrined that he should be present to his imagination as a horrid little runaway burglar.

Tom stood inside the library door, hat in hand, looking as fixedly at Mr. Roslyn as Mr. Roslyn looked at him.

"Well, my boy?" said Mr. Roslyn, inquiringly.

"I 'm Tom Hart," answered Tom simply.

"Oh, you are!" his heart giving a queer throb. The night of the attempted burglary he had dreamed of Winthrop, his little lost Winthrop, sole legacy left him by his dead wife; the little fellow with the big, solemn eyes who had vanished from that home when he was only two years old, and whom he had sought so fruitlessly all the nine years since; he had dreamed of him that night, and when he woke to see a light, showing, as a halo would, the slender, dark form of a boy close beside his bed, he had scarcely been able to suppress a wild cry, or to prevent himself from clasping the boy there and then to his heart. And when the boy had gone, a boy, he knew, he assured himself, who, from his very appearance, could not possibly have anything in common with his boy, he could not help thinking of him. In a quiet way he had tried to find him, but without success. The fates seemed to be all against him when it came to finding boys. He had thought he heard his voice down at the store one day and he had been startled at the effect it had on him. And now here was the boy. The voice he knew perfectly, and as he looked at him more keenly he recognized him.

"Well, Tom Hart, sit down there, opposite me. You ran away from me."

"Yes, sir."

"Why, I should like to know?"

"Because, sir, one of the men was my friend, and if the shot had hit one it might be him, and if he was

shot he would have no friend but me. I had to go."

"Was he shot?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. I did n't know that before. The man they caught was n't hurt any."

"Did they catch one?" eagerly.

"They did that; did n't you know it?" suspiciously.

"No, sir. What did they do with him?"

"He turned out to be a man they needed very badly and he is well disposed of by this time under lock and key, where such people belong."

Tom did not seem to dissent.

"Do you think he deserved it?"

"Why, yes, of course," in surprise.

"Why did n't you hand over the other one where he belonged?"

"I did n't think he belonged anywhere in particular. He was my friend."

"Why did you come to see me to-day?"

"I came about him, some. I did n't know anybody else to go to."

"You thought you knew me, did you?" The answer touched him strangely.

"I—I—did n't know any one else."

"You are ready to have me have him arrested now, are you?"

Tom leaned forward as though to say some-

thing, then opened his hands with a gesture of despair.

"I don't know what I'll do if you do that! I'll be the worst friend Reddy or Mother Lide ever had! I just came, not knowing what you would do, but sure I'd got to do something. And I promised to come," earnestly, "and I couldn't bear to wait any longer, and I was ashamed to see you down in your store, and I couldn't stand that."

"What do you know about my store?"

"I buy there for Robert Bower." There was no overlooking the note of pride in Tom's voice.

A slight smile crossed Mr. Roslyn's face. His head clerk had told him funny yarns about Bower's agent.

"I had to see you, that's all there is to it."

"No; it is not all there is to it. What do you want of me in regard to this man you speak of?"

"Reddy isn't exactly a man. At least, he seems a lot like a boy. He is selling molasses candy now, but he ought to have some work and—and"—

Tom felt as though he were floundering in deep water. Mr. Roslyn's keen eyes fixed on him made him feel as though there was no reason in the world for his coming to him, as though it were a rank imposition to even think of Mr. Roslyn's interesting himself in a criminal, but he wasn't the sort to give up and he forged ahead.

"And I've got to look out for him and I didn't

know anybody who would listen to me at all about work for him unless you would. I thought you would know where he could go to get work, if he could get work."

"You thought, as a matter of fact," said Mr. Roslyn, rather sharply, "that perhaps I would give him work in my wholesale house."

Tom had not only thought that, but he had dreamed a golden dream about it, the most imaginative piece of work that had ever emanated from his practical brain. But he had to face it out.

"Yes, sir; I could n't tell but that there might be something he could work at in your store."

"My boy," said Mr. Roslyn, gravely, "you make a great mistake, and possibly for your age and experience a very natural one. You will find, sir, that reputable stores do not take into their employ men known to be lawbreakers. Those who have sought opportunities for wronging the property rights of fellow-citizens cannot reasonably be trusted to resist such opportunity thrust in their way. And what could he do? Do you know anything he can do?"

"He can make molasses candy."

"Quite an occupation for a grown man! I can tell you the probable truth of the matter. As a boy he made light of school opportunities, furnished by thriving, industrious, tax-paying citizens. What he could evade he evaded. Such chances as he had for industry and profiting by right example he pur-

posely neglected. Of choice he joined himself with the element around him most given to lawlessness, to noisy disregard of others' rights, to everything in the way of personal indulgence that ends in vice, to familiarizing the mind with reports of successful crime. As soon as he could he became one of a gang whose time was spent, not in self-improvement nor in strengthening the sinews for life's struggle, nor in benefiting their community in any way, but in deliberately cultivating every tendency toward and every opportunity for criminal acts. The strength and opportunity of his early manhood went that way. Finally, with confederates under arrest, injured and weak, temporarily unable to proceed in his chosen path, with little opening before him but the tramp life or the penitentiary, he thinks virtue is better than vice; believes he would like a regular salary, and not knowing how to do anything, expects people who have treasured their resources and made men of themselves to employ him. No, sir! An evil choice in youth is an evil thing, and it bears evil consequences. And a man with such a record is not one to be lightly turned in with more honest boys and men."

Tom was appalled. That Mr. Roslyn had correctly described Reddy's boyhood he felt sure. But the pity of it! That Reddy was at all as he described now he indignantly denied. It seemed very hopeless to him. There was no use arguing about

it. Evidently Mr. Roslyn was a man to know his own mind. He understood the situation, and if he had seen a way to help Tom, or had wished to, he could say so. There was nothing farther for Tom to say on that matter.

"Yes, sir," he said dejectedly, as Mr. Roslyn waited for a remark. "I wanted to tell you why I ran away. I guess I did tell you. You won't mind my buying things at your store for Mr. Bower, will you?"

Something about the smallness of the boy, the pathetic scantiness of his clothing, the resistless acquiescence, the sadness of the previously lively brown eyes, made a slight dryness in Mr. Roslyn's throat.

"I— I shall be very glad indeed of your custom."

"And Miss Roslyn asked me to come here to the house to see her. I said I would if you would let me. Would you rather I did n't?" He was standing, his piece of a cap in his hand, waiting.

It was too absurd; Mr. Roslyn did not know how he ever kept from laughing.

"Oh, do just as she says. She is quite the mistress of this house, I assure you. Must you go, Tom? Won't you stay and lunch with me?"

He hoped he would, he wished he would. He was sure he had n't any knack with boys, and his heart fairly ached over the boy's disappointment.

"I 've had my dinner."

"Perhaps it was n't a good one," hazarded Mr. Roslyn, wishing to prolong the conversation but scarcely knowing how.

"It was, just!" and Tom's face looked more natural. "Potpie, she said the name was. Ever have any?"

"I should think so! Potpie, now, is good eating."

"She 's the cook, Mrs. Bower is."

Mr. Roslyn wished that Laramie was there. She would know what to say and how to say it.

"Where 's your mother?"

"Dead."

"Can you remember her?"

"Oh, yes, sort of."

"Do you remember your father?"

"No, but I remember my mother telling me about him. His name was Tom Hart, just like mine."

"Do you remember anything else?"

"No. I must go now. Good-bye."

"I 'll go to the door with you.

He wanted an excuse for detaining him, but he could n't think of any. In the hall he called up the stairs:

"Laramie! Your friend is going."

But Laramie was in Miss Roslyn's room, and did not hear him. Tom moved on toward the door, scarcely heeding as he went the wide entrance to

the drawing-room, the handsome appointments of the great hall with its fireplace and settles and antlers and all sorts of interesting things. He was bitterly disappointed, but he saw no help for it. He had been mistaken; he could not blame Mr. Roslyn. He had made his course seem just enough; but, after all, there was Reddy, and what was to be done for Reddy?

"Good-bye," he said at the door, raising his eyes to Mr. Roslyn's.

"Good-bye, Tom, my boy," extending his hand.

He wanted to keep him, to know him, to help him; his heart had never warmed so toward any boy, though he was interested in many. But though he could manage men and affairs with unerring accuracy he was at a loss now.

"You will come again? you will feel at home here, won't you?"

Tom frowned slightly, alert, suspicious at once. The man was making fun of him. He, Tom, at home there! His keen glance took in details he had not noticed before,—the beautiful polish of the wood, the handsomely covered walls, the signs of elegance wherever he turned. Then he looked at himself.

Mr. Roslyn saw he had some way made a mistake and sighed.

Then Tom saw things as they were: himself, hurt, half resentful, distrustful, and another Boy beside

him, ready to meet Mr. Roslyn more than half way, understanding him, feeling for him, willing to believe his kind words; a braver, truer, more manly boy.

"I'd kick me if I could," thought Tom, and frank and ready as a boy could be, he smiled honestly up at Mr. Roslyn, and held out his hand to the hand that was already half withdrawn.

"You're very good. I feel bad about Reddy, but there's no reason for you to be so kind to me. I'm coming to see Miss Roslyn. They've been awful good to me at your store."

And before Mr. Roslyn had half realized the strange pleasure of the boy's firm hand-clasp Tom was going down the street, not running this time, but walking as fast as he could.

It did seem as though the next best thing to getting back to Mother Lide and Kathie and John would be to get back to the store and Mrs. Bower and Daisy and Bobby. He thought affectionately of the potpie, and with some trepidation of Mr. Bower's return, and in the most gloomy manner imaginable of Reddy. It was Reddy's increasing restlessness that bothered him so. And something must be done.

"If he can't be trusted to keep away from those fellows a month, Mr. Roslyn's about right," he thought.

He had to go through one of the finest business streets to return, and with a street-boy's acute powers

of observation he generally saw all there was to be seen. A fine display in a window always compelled his attention, because it had been his habit to notice anything very pretty and describe it to Kathie.

A furniture store had an exhibit of a child's bedroom. It was as fresh and pretty a spot in blue and white as one could wish. Tom imagined himself telling all about it to Kathie, and could see how her blue eyes would shine and how her thin little hands would clasp in delight and how the reddish curls would join in expressing her excitement.

"If we could only have some blue and white stuff we could make our place look pretty, too," thought Tom. "Mrs. Bower don't take much stock in it, but we can make things look better for him, I think."

When he got back, he found Daisy was keeping store and Mrs. Bower had her arms deep in her wash-tub.

"These things will be dry and ironed to-night, and perhaps we can clean up and I can put their clean things on the children, and I'll make something nice that Robert likes for dinner, and perhaps he'll seem more cheerful."

It was plain she dreaded the weary gloom she believed would come with her husband. That would n't do at all.

"First-rate! Soon as you get 'em out we'll go to work, and Daisy can let us know if any one comes in. Daisy's a mighty smart little girl."

Daisy, shy, pathetic little figure, smoothed out her frock and looked overweeningly important.

"And here's Bobby getting out the clothes-pins for his mother. Oh, good Bobby! Helps his mother!" and Tom stooped and patted the pale little face. He was thinking how gentle John always seemed to be with children and how ready they were to mind him.

"Reddy been in?"

"No."

It boded no good, but Tom tried to shake it off.

"I'll beg him to-night, or to-morrow. I just will if he 'll listen."

Beg him to do what? Tom scarcely knew. To go home to Mother Lide? Reddy would n't; but even if he did what good would it do? Without an occupation there was but one level for him in the tenement. Beg him to keep away from Brown's friends in the city? Beg him to have some backbone and perseverance? Without something to do Tom did not feel as though he could trust him very far.

When the clothes were out, they went to work on the bedroom. Tom cleaned the windows in masterly style, brushed down the walls and swept the floor, pounded the mattress and shook the pillows, while Mrs. Bower scrubbed the floor, washed the woodwork, and rubbed up the bed. Tom mended the one chair and polished the chest of drawers.

"These two beds and the chest and what little 's down-stairs is all we saved," said Mrs. Bower, bitterly.

"Why, it's a lot, I think!" said Tom, in surprise. "It's lucky we got so many of those pictures. I'll fasten them up. It looks clean in here, I tell you. There's some of that smelling sassafras left yet I'll bring in here. Smells just splendid, I think. Won't those curtains look good when they're ironed?" he added, anxiously.

"No, they won't—never did and never will. Bits of old cloth don't make curtains. But I'll tell you what I will do. I've got some clean old stuff laid away that I'll use. It was a dress of mine that wore out and it's too thin and worn to use for the children, and it won't wear for curtains, but it will look pretty for a week or so."

And before long they were both astonished at the pleasing effect of the thin, white sash curtains at the two windows.

"Got any blue stuff?"

"Indeed, I have! I've got more blue stuff than anything else—blue paper cambric."

"How funny!"

"No, it isn't funny. It was one of the things Robert tried and failed up in, and though we got rid of nearly everything else, there's a piece of blue paper cambric nobody wanted."

So they made some blue bows for the curtains and Tom was very nearly satisfied.

"I helped Joe Mulhaley paint a room floor just before he got married and we painted it blue. Oh, it was the finest floor you ever saw! I wish we could paint this."

"Paint costs money," laughed Mrs. Bower. "I think gray in the middle and a blue border would be pretty."

"Yes; that would be prettier yet."

They decided that when the bed was made up with its clean things the room would look very well indeed, and Tom proposed that they go to work in the down-stairs room.

That was more of a job, but Tom saw to thorough work. He had up the strip of carpet that covered the middle of the floor, beat out the lounge and pillow, blacked the whole of the stove, cleaned the walls and windows, rubbed up the chest of drawers, cupboard, table, and chairs; and Mrs. Bower scrubbed the floors and woodwork. It seemed like a very clean, neat room when the strip of green carpet went down again. Mrs. Bower put a clean case on the pillow and improvised a curtain for the window, with bows; cleaned up her cupboard and drawers, and the more she worked, the fresher and happier she seemed to feel.

"It's like a real old time house-cleaning, and I did love to clean at home with Aunt Mollie. I believe Robert will be real pleased with this. You just love pictures, don't you, Tom? I never did see

such pretty ones as they sent last time. That's just beautiful! Supper-time, sure; and if there 's a piece of that gingerbread left we 'll eat it."

But it was all gone. Daisy had made six sales all herself, and was the proudest little tot imaginable. Tom praised her enough to well-nigh turn her head.

"You do believe in chirkin' up children, do n't you, Tom?" said Mrs. Bower, half wistfully. "It 's a good way. They 've never been so happy as since you 've been here."

"It 's my Friend makes 'em happy, I guess," laughed Tom.

Mrs. Bower gave him a queer look and turned to get supper.

"He 's like Him. He 's like the blessed Lord himself, or I 'm no judge. Bless him!"

Reddy came home, cheerful and moody by turns. He had sold out as usual, but he was not disposed to give any account of his adventures during the day. He held Bobby and Daisy on his lap, gave them each some peanuts and a cent, sang songs for them, and told a funny story. They both doted on Reddy, and the mother often stopped her work of clearing up to look at the little group in the failing light on the back step; but there was a thinness about Reddy's face, a stoop of his shoulders, a fitfulness in his manner, that made her shake her head. She liked Reddy. She was sure her husband would not, or at least would not like his being there.

The children and their mother went to bed, the store was shut up, and Tom and Reddy sat on the back steps talking in a low tone.

"Reddy, I want to see Mother Lide and Kathie and John so bad I don't know what to do."

"You could get back easy enough if you wanted to," said Reddy, with apparent carelessness; "steal rides or walk."

"Would you go?"

"Not there."

"Reddy, do you see any of those lodging-house bums now?"

"Oh, quit talking!"

"Reddy, do you?"

"Well, what if I do?"

"What if you do? A lot if you do, and you know it! They 'll persuade you to go into some fool thing and you 'll be the sponge. Brown 's sent up."

"Well, I guess I know that."

"You are loose now; why don't you stay loose? Why don't you get something to do, and be decent and be ready to take care of your mother? She 's getting old, I tell you! She 's all worn out!"

"Hear you talk!" said Reddy fiercely. "Get something to do! What can I get to do? I 've been and been and been. Most of them won't so much as let me open my head. If they 'll talk at all they say 'reference.' If I say 'I 'm a stranger here,' they say, 'Where did you come from and why did you

leave?' They say, 'What can you do?' If I say 'anything,' they show up quick enough that that is nothing at all. For lifting and hauling and that, I'm not strong enough; it shows plain enough, don't it? If there is a place for me, I'll never come near it. A fellow that's begun the way I have just better stick it out and take the consequences. There's nothing else. It's fair enough, ain't it?"

"There's nothing fair to Mother Lide about it," said Tom in a trembling voice. "I'd have more backbone! I'd sell molasses candy till I was gray, and stay with her and comfort her, sooner than I would let her wear her heart all out waiting while I went to the dogs with Brown and his set!"

"She's forgotten all about me."

Tom sprang up, gave Reddy a slap in the face, and squared off angrily. "Don't you lie like that again!"

Reddy started to seize Tom by his shirt and shake him, but he sank back on the step again and began to laugh.

"You're a regular little game-cock. If I were to shake you by that rotten little shirt of yours you'd be a pretty sight for old Bower to see. Could n't keep store. Sit down here by me."

Tom sat down, half ashamed now that Reddy did n't fight him.

"Here, kid," and Reddy put his arm around Tom and drew him up close. "You must n't get so mad.

It's unhealthy. I have held off from those fellows, Tom, but I'm all on their side. I see sure I'll give in sooner or later—might as well be sooner. I can't stay here; that's plain enough. I can't sell molasses candy and stuff unless I am here—at least now. When I get all my strength back I won't want to do it, anyway: I can see that. I do n't believe I'll get anything to do. If I go back to mother it will only be to cut her all up again. She's had it once and lived it down. What's the use of stirring her all up and putting her through the same mill again?"

"There is n't any use," and Tom fairly clung to Reddy in his earnestness. "Be a man about it. If there's a right thing to do just do it, no matter what happens."

"It sounds easy," and Reddy gave a short laugh.

"It *is* easy, if you'd let the Friend that stands willing help you! He knows. He lived just your age, he knew all kinds of people. He knows us the way we really are. He is great. He is powerful. He is wonderful. He is strong; and just as much as you're willing he'll help you be those things. Listen.

"One there is above all others

—that's Him—

"Well deserves the name of friend.
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, *free*, and knows no end."

"I ain't acquainted with him."

"Oh, Reddy, you do n't have to be! He 's acquainted with you. Just think of him and you 'll feel different. You 'll feel like wanting and doing just what you did n't want so very bad before. What looked hard will look easy."

"Well, Tom, I 'm willing to try a bit longer, but you need n't be setting your heart on anything. You 're an awful good boy, Tom."

Reddy gave him a hug with both arms and with a smile that wrote "Kathie" all over his face he gave him a kiss on the forehead, then one on the mouth, another hug, and pushed him off, saying, "Go on up to bed, you 've made fool enough of me for one night."

CHAPTER XIV

ROBERT BOWER 'S RETURN

"I believe the Reddy Tom told about must be that fellow selling molasses candy by the post-office."

Mr. Roslyn hesitated a moment, for time was precious, then retraced his steps to the post-office. He stood on the steps which gave him the best look at the molasses-candy vender, ostensibly examining some mail, but watching the young man. He saw him make two sales.

"Very well done," he thought; "natural knack, inspires confidence and liking; obliging, quick, courteous." He watched Reddy standing idle. "Keen face, quick-seeing eyes, intelligent. Now really he does n't look like a bad fellow."

While he looked, two young men, as plainly stamped as a silver dollar, lounged up to Reddy. After a moment of stiffness on his part, he evidently began to listen to them with awakening interest. Their flashiness and swagger annoyed Mr. Roslyn; that was the sort of thing he hated. A moment 's watching the progress of the conversation and he had had enough.

"That settles it. No matter what one did, he could not be weaned from what he best likes. Asso-

ciates of that description would undo in five minutes what honesty could do for him in five years." And he walked away indignant but relieved.

Dr. Rogers came out on the post-office steps. He opened his watch and looked up the street. He snapped the case and looked down the street. He saw Reddy and his two friends and snorted. They were in the act of leaving. The expression of interest died out of Reddy 's face.

Dr. Rogers stalked over to Reddy.

" Are n't you ashamed, Reddy! If you let those fellows come it over you you 'll get to drinking, and you 'll be flat on your back sick as a dog for fall; and no such luck for a nurse again, likely! They want to get you into some police scrape, and you know it. Why do n't you get something steady to do where they can't hang around you? Why do n't you send them away? "

" They are n't so easy discouraged as honest people," laughed Reddy. " I 'm a poor stick, I guess, doctor."

" You 're not as poor now as you will be after you 've let those fellows have their way with you. Come, man, brace up! "

That afternoon Reddy went home tired and discouraged. Tom was in the shop, the back room door was open, and there was a sound of talking.

" Old man got back, Tom? "

" Yes, this morning."

"Get around any?"

"Not to amount to anything."

"Say, Tom, I can't stand it. The fellows are after me and if I stay I'll fall in with 'em, and mighty quick, too. I can try a little longer, but not here. You see I want to go in with 'em, that's the trouble. It ain't as though I didn't want to. I'm going. I'm going to tramp it."

Mr. Roslyn's words came back to Tom—"Tramping or the penitentiary."

"See here, Reddy, try just one thing for me first, won't you? Just one. Please, Reddy!"

"What is it?"

"Do you know that place where we stopped to eat, coming here, and Brown stole what you had, and a boy gave me some cherry pie?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, won't you buy you a ticket to there? Just buy it, and ride on the cars like anybody, and go to a house next back of that nearest one. Jed Cooper lives in that nearest one, and his aunt lives in the other one, and she's a good woman, and you ask for work there. I just know you'll get it. Won't you try that first; won't you?"

"And I just know I won't get it. But I'll try it if you like. I'll do that much for you. I'd like to ride on the cars, too. And I've got money enough. Train goes at 6.30. What you going to do?"

"Why, I'll stay until Mr. Bower can keep store

and then I'm going back. And, Reddy, you'll come there to the tenement to see me, won't you, even if you don't see Mother Lide? What? Yes?"

"Yes; that's easy enough."

"Come on, then; we'll go in here and see the folks. Oh, Daisy!" he called. "Come mind the shop. We're coming in to see Mr. Bower."

Daisy came primly in, and Tom escorted Reddy to the back room.

"This is Reddy, Robert," said Mrs. Bower. "He has been selling my gingerbread and his candy since he's been around."

Reddy shook hands and asked Mr. Bower how he was feeling, but it all seemed very awkward and stiff.

"I came back early, Mrs. Bower," said Reddy, clearly and very politely, "so as to say good-bye to you all. I leave on the 6.30 to-night. I expected to take Tom with me when I went, but he seems to think he'd better stay a bit longer, until Mr. Bower can get around easier."

Mrs. Bower's face lengthened perceptibly at the mention of Tom's going.

"Oh, Tom!" she said, "you weren't thinking of going?"

"Why, I'll wait until Mr. Bower can take hold. You couldn't keep me, you know," laughing, "after I wasn't any more use."

"Oh, Tom! Robert, you can't think how Tom has helped!" she explained.

"Well, I 'll be going," said Reddy, rising.

"Now, Reddy, you sit right still. We had dinner early for Mr. Bower, and we 'll have a snack of supper before you go. We 'll all sit around once more together. Come, Reddy, no saying No. I 'll have my way about this. You 've been kindness itself to the children and it 's no more than fair to them."

It soothed Reddy; he had a hurt, sore feeling at his heart. Bobby climbed up in Reddy's lap, and Reddy sang and talked to him in a low voice, while Mr. Bower looked on with jealous eyes.

"The store looked better, did n't it, Mr. Bower?" said Reddy. Now that he was going he felt less obtrusive, and Mr. Bower had not said a word.

"Yes, it did so," arousing himself. "Everything looked good to me."

"Your wife is such a good cook; you will soon gain strength at home."

"She used to be a good cook," hesitated Mr. Bower.

"Is now," put in Tom, promptly. "Beats anybody ever I saw!"

"That 's the way Robert used to talk when we were first married, Tom," said Mrs. Bower, good-naturedly. "But he has forgotten how, now."

"It 's likely I never was much hand, Mollie," and Mr. Bower smiled a little.

Bobby slipped down from Reddy's lap, stood by his father, just touching his father's thin hand with

his own little pale fingers, and said timidly, "Kind papa."

Reddy never forgot the agonized expression in the man's eyes, the love and the longing and the pain.

"You have two very fine children, Mr. Bower," said Reddy, desperately determined to sustain the conversation. "Bobby is as smart as he can be, and Daisy is a regular little woman."

There was a pleased look on Mr. Bower's face that told Reddy that kind of talk would take, and he continued, not sticking at much of anything. He thought of every little saying of Bobby's since he had been there, and they had been few enough, and told them all, for Reddy was a fluent talker and a good story-teller. It was part of his charm with all who knew him. Daisy's little ways were related in a fashion that made Mrs. Bower stare at him in amazement. How could Reddy know so much? As for Mr. Bower, he was hungry and thirsty for it. He scarcely noticed the time until supper was ready, and he had thought he could not stand it with the stranger in the room.

It was with real sincerity, for he could speak in no other way, that Mr. Bower told Reddy he was sorry he was going.

"If you are here again, look us up; I would like to see more of you."

Then Reddy said good-bye to the children and

Mrs. Bower, and held Tom's hand a minute out by the store door, and Tom said, "You 'll do just as you promised, won't you, Reddy?"

"Yes, first. Good-bye," and the tall, slender figure was soon out of Tom's sight.

Tom could see that Mr. Bower was uneasy with strangers, and he meant to obliterate himself as completely as possible when he had finished what he always did for Mrs. Bower. He wiped the dishes and straightened up the room, put on Bobby's nightgown for him, and played a tune for Daisy on his mouth organ, the one thing he had that was his own. A late customer came and Tom waited on her. The door was open and Mr. Bower could hear the polite inquiry after himself, and then the woman said pleasantly:

"And I hope you 'll be staying on here yourself, Tom; we all say it 's a pleasure to come in and buy of you."

"I like it," said Tom. "I never did see such nice people as live around here."

Mr. Bower had never seen a nice person while he was keeping store, and he wondered.

Tom was planning to go up-stairs then, but he asked Mr. Bower if he would like to see the account-book, and Mr. Bower said he would.

"I guess my bookkeeping is n't very fancy," said Tom, "but I think I can explain it all right."

He sat down by Mr. Bower, and though it was a

curious sample of accounts, it was all very plain and added up accurately.

"You ought to do it this way," said Mr. Bower, and he showed him single and double entry and all manner of neat little professional quirks.

"My, what a lot you know!" admiringly.

"I used to be called a first-class bookkeeper," replied Mr. Bower, with a touch of pride.

"Well, I should think so. Let me see now if I can do that."

He made several mistakes; Mr. Bower patiently corrected him and each time with increasing interest.

The next trial Tom did well, and Mr. Bower looked as pleased as possible and encouraged him.

"Bobby 's a lucky chap, I say!" exclaimed Tom.

"Why?" demanded Mr. Bower.

"Why? Why, because he can learn such a lot from you! I 've been to school pretty steady, but I never saw a teacher could show so much about figures as you can in ten minutes."

Mrs. Bower, rocking Bobby by the door, looked at her husband in surprise. His face was pleased and interested.

"Bless that boy!" she thought. "He 's got the same way with Robert that he has with the children, and with me, too."

Tom told in a matter-of-fact way of the sales made, and of the things that sold best, and he found to his great surprise that Mr. Bower really knew

about things, their prices and qualities. He had not thought he could.

Tom was interested; he liked to talk shop. He became enthusiastic and Mr. Bower entered into the subject in the same spirit, until Mrs. Bower stopped them reluctantly.

"Robert ought to go to bed, Tom. He has n't seen that clean bedroom yet, either."

"All right," said Tom, and he took the sleeping Bobby carefully from her, carried him up-stairs, and laid him on the low mattress bed on the floor beside Daisy.

Mr. Bower looked rather bewildered at the act.

"Ain't you afraid he 'll drop him?" he asked involuntarily.

"No. I would n't be afraid you 'd drop him, either."

She did a few things around the room, and Mr. Bower stared at the account-book.

"That 's an uncommon sharp boy, that Tom," he said at last; "keen as a razor; seems a nice, quiet boy, too—or not noisy, anyway."

"Yes." Mr. Bower might as well find out Tom for himself.

"I seem to have had such a nice home-getting, Mollie. It 's good to see you."

"Oh, Robert, do you think so?" Her face worked painfully, but she turned away so that he would not see it.

"And the children are so good. You must be a good hand to bring up children, Mollie."

"They 're nice children. They 're both just like you, Robert."

"And the store in such good shape—and in here. And I thought you 'd just have to starve and be turned out. You 're a grand hand to manage, Mollie."

"I wish I was, Robert; but it 's Tom, really. He just took care of the children, and managed the store, until I got a little strength and courage."

"I would n't think such a young boy would want to or would be willing to try!"

"Well, Robert, he says—he thinks—he talks—well, Robert, he seems to think Somebody helps him. Perhaps you can understand him. He says he 'll stay until you can get around."

Mr. Bower asked no questions, but he wondered about it. In his weak state sleep came very fitfully, and he had had many long hours of weary, weary thinking, regret, unavailing going over past failures, hounding and worrying himself with blame and gloomy prognostications for the future; but to-night, after a peaceful evening, his dozing thoughts found something new to occupy him. There seemed to be so much hope and life and energy about Tom. He wondered dully what or who helped him. All his life he had needed somebody to help him, but help never came his way. He did not have the faculty

for availing himself of it. Well, perhaps he would find out.

That Tom interested him was something, and the next day he found that a great deal of his time was spent in watching Tom—what he did for the children, how he helped about the gingerbread and molasses candy, for they had decided not to let that drop, as it sold so well; his way with the customers, his doing this and that and the other thing in the store.

They helped Mr. Bower out into the store, and he looked over the stock with Tom. He liked it. Things looked as they should, and all the attempts at making things attractive pleased him, though he had not the least invention in that way himself. After they had seen everything, Mr. Bower still sat there while Tom rubbed the bottles and the counter and everything that could be rubbed; as he worked he whistled, and he could whistle like a professional —Ryan had often had him in as a whistler—or he sang, and his voice was as true and sweet as a boy's voice could be; many a time it had made Mother Lide think of Reddy, and to Kathie it was an unending source of happiness. He sang snatches of street songs, bits of this or that, and then, half feeling for the notes, and in so low a tone that Mr. Bower had to listen more intently, he began:

"One there is above all others,
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's,
Costly, free, and knows no end."

There seemed to be a feeling in Tom's voice that had not been there before, and something in the man vibrated in sympathy. He waited for Tom to go on when he stopped, but was afraid to say anything for fear of breaking the spell. Then Tom began again, a little surer, dwelling on some words, repeating some, varying it to suit his mood:

"His is love beyond a brother's"—

"Who is it, Tom?" asked Mr. Bower.

Tom started. He had half forgotten Mr. Bower and the store.

"Oh, it 's a song I heard in church. It was good singing, too, I can tell you! Just good voices!"

He sang it again. "Sounds nice, do n't it? They sang another one that I know the tune of, but I can't get the words.

"Come ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish;
La-la-la-la-la.
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish;
Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

"There, that's the most I've remembered of it yet. There 's a lot more, but I just can't get it. I 've tried and tried."

He sang on, the melody suited them both, and occasionally he put in some words.

"Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot cure."

"That sounds good," said Mr. Bower, slowly, "if there was anything to it."

"Oh, there is," said Tom in astonishment. "Just sort of let go of yourself, and sense it once, and it's the realest thing ever was. Why, think of it," and his voice rang out clear and strong, as though it must carry conviction with it,

"One there is above all others,"

to the end of the verse,

"His is love beyond a brother's.

"Why, he'll come and live with you! There is n't any of this shut-up-ness there is between you and other people; just your very seeing and hearing other people keeps you from getting right near the real them—and I guess it's lucky it is that way; but you want something else, and One there is! He knows, He understands. He is ready with the right help at the right minute, if you 'll only take it. For you, you know, He's there with a man's heart, and a man's help.

"Makes me tired to hear myself talk. You ought to hear a man I heard once. He could use words that swelled you all up inside, and you just saw it all as plain as plain, and you wanted to just give yourself right over to being a whole, life-sized, big sort of a person, able to see things the way they are, the way Christ did; able to tell what makes real life, and what do n't, because you know things as He knew

them; able to feel free because He has freed you; that's what the man said. Well, it's mighty different, anyway. Why, Mr. Bower, it would be the making of you," leaning his elbows on the counter and looking straight at him. "You could live. You could! Oh, He'd help you! He'd stand by you. He'd care for you. He'd bring out the man in you. You'd get along. You'd feel different. Don't I wish I could talk!"

"But how about you?"

"Well, don't you think it means anything to me? Wasn't I heading straight for—Ryan's—and Reddy's sort of a way, and chose it, and liked it, and as soon as I just knew He was my friend, the best friend ever anybody had, didn't I know straight off that wasn't the way?—that there was a sight more to things, that there was a right way about things, and I wanted to have some honesty and decency about me? I'm no talker. I wish you could hear the man I heard!"

"I used to hear about religion years ago," said Mr. Bower thoughtfully. "But what I heard sort of turned me against it. I used to hear"—

But a look at Tom's face stopped him. He wasn't a man to intentionally hurt or perplex any one.

"It makes no difference what you heard," was the quick reply. "Might have been every word true and yet not what you could take hold of. But if you'd begin by hearing, by knowing, by believing Jesus

Christ is your friend, that he wants to help you, and can, that he is the mightiest somebody ever was and will bring it all to you, why, then, you see you 'd have something to go by that would explain things, and fit them to you, and help you get all the use out of them meant for you. I 'm going to learn, I can tell you ! When I think how I 've always lived right in the thick of churches, and people that know all about such things, and yet never tried to hear about him, I just wonder he ever wanted to have anything to do with me—me such a fool about everything ! "

Mrs. Bower had heard it all from the back room. It was hard for her to understand. She had been so firmly convinced when she was first married that "religion" was distasteful to her husband, and had been so averse to saying anything about the subject or urging any recognition of the more ordinary Christian forms, that little by little her own slight hold on such things had become practically nothing. She had a vague remembrance of her Sunday-school teacher once urging the class to " let their light shine." It was one of the few times when she had come near realizing that there was a real live heart to the matter.

" Tom lets his shine," she thought. " I put mine, if I ever had any, under a bushel. Well, it is n't too late, perhaps. I can do what I know and remember, and it may be there will something more like Tom understands come to me, too. Poor Robert ! I believe

Tom is right. I believe it would be everything to Robert if he saw it as Tom does."

"Tom," said Mr. Bower, "I wish I knew the rest of that hymn you were singing."

"So do I. See here! I can find out as easy as not. I'll go ask Miss Roslyn."

CHAPTER XV

A PORTRAIT

It was late in the afternoon two or three days afterwards when Tom rang the Roslyns' bell. The maid who opened the door greeted him cordially. She and every one else in the house had been instructed by Laramie to treat any boy answering to Tom's description with good-will, and if she were out to send him up to Miss Roslyn. But Laramie was not out, and she flew down the stairs to meet him, asking him all in a breath why he had n't been there before, why he had waited so long, and a dozen other questions.

"I want to know," said Tom, as soon as he could, "what that hymn was they sang in church that day. The choir sang it. 'Come ye disconsolate.' I was sure you could tell me all the words and there 's a man I know wants to hear the rest of it. I can't sing all the words."

"Yes, dear; what a rush you are in, as usual. You are coming up to see Miss Roslyn and we will have a real good talk. She wants to hear about that little lame girl. I 'll write down the words for you."

To talk about Kathie! Tom was eager enough, and he wished they could go faster up the stairs. Miss

Roslyn's room was not much like the one he had seen her in last, with all its signs of packing up. This room was so neat and beautiful and cosy and home-like that Tom brightened at the very sight of it, and he was so glad to shake hands with Miss Roslyn and look into the kind, cheerful face again. And she wanted to hear about Kathie. He took a hasty look at the table beside Miss Roslyn to see if that book were there yet, and there it lay. Tom had a burning desire to see inside it. Why, the very words Jesus Christ himself said were in there! She had said so. Tom felt as though he would know just how Jesus said them, and that they would thrill him even as though he had been there and heard them.

"I told Tom you wanted to hear about the little lame girl," said Laramie.

"Dear child! How is she?"

"Oh, that little book about Emily did her a sight of good. I read it to her, and she wanted to pattern after Emily right off, only really Kathie is lots sweeter and nicer herself. You'd think so, if you could see her, and she liked so much all that in the book about the heavenly Father, and his caring for her. She took right hold. We didn't work in box factories, nor fancy stores, nor such, John and I didn't, but John, he's a thinker—a fellow to sit around and think—and he thought of some things for Kathie, knitting and plants. We got the pots and dirt and seeds and slips and all. John really did it, and they were doing

firstrate when I left, but I do n't know what 's happened since," a shadow crossing his face.

"I 've found the hymn, Tom," said Laramie, who had been looking at a hymnal. "Aunt Mary, Tom wanted the words of 'Come ye disconsolate.'"

Miss Roslyn smiled and in the quiet, beautiful voice that every one loved who knew her, she repeated the words.

Tom listened intently.

"That 's it," he said, and whipping his mouth-organ out of his pocket he began in the softest fashion to breath out the tune as he had heard it in church, with all the variations and repetitions.

"Why, Tom, how lovely!" exclaimed Miss Roslyn. "What a real treat!"

"How can you do it?" asked Laramie.

"It 's the words; I want to get the words. Can you say it again?" and at once Miss Roslyn repeated it. And Tom began, as she finished, to sing it, in order to see if he had the words, just in a low voice, but so sweet, so true, with something so touching in the tone, that both Laramie and her aunt listened with something very like tears in their eyes.

"Do sing me another, Tom," pleaded Miss Roslyn.

"Why, I do n't know any more except that other one they sang," turning to Laramie; and he sang "One there is above all others." He loved that, and the reverence, the adoration in his voice was altogether too much for Miss Roslyn.

"Laramie, does it sound to you as it does to me?"

"Mary, it sounds so to me, I think."

They all looked around to see Laramie's father standing in the open doorway.

"Father, do you remember Tom? He helped you pack—mighty poor help it was, too, Tom, if I remember anything about it—and you preached to him."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," and Mr. Roslyn gravely advanced and shook hands with Tom. "A boy of parts, with a strong call, I felt sure, for propagating the Gospel. Did you have opportunity to look into the books I marked for you in the catalogue?"

"Not yet," said Tom, as much at sea as on the former occasion of his meeting with this gentleman.

"The warm weather, I suppose," and he looked slightly disappointed. "Do n't neglect them, however; youth, my boy, is the time in which to store the mind with lofty thoughts, noble ambitions, with the golden words of the heroes of the world. It is all yours for the reading."

"I wish I could hear you talk again the way you did that day," said Tom, sincerely. "That was what I call preaching," using Mr. Roslyn's own expression.

The scholarly face flushed with pleasure.

"A boy of parts, Laramie. Urge him to the cultivation of a correct taste in literature," and with a slight bow to all he withdrew.

Laramie always thought her father's obtuseness delightful, but she was particularly charmed with this evidence of it.

"You ought to come and see father, Tom. He would love to have you, and he could tell you more about things you would like to know about than any person I could think of. There 's more to that last hymn, Tom. They only sang one verse of it."

"Is there?"

Miss Roslyn repeated the words.

"You know everything." Tom's voice showed his astonishment. "I like the first verse best, though."

"Come, Tom," said Laramie, "I want you to come down with me into the study to see Uncle David. I think he is there now."

"He won't want to see me, will he?"

"Oh, yes! He said to have you come in if he was at home."

So they went down, though Tom wished he was going right on out the front door.

"Uncle David, Tom 's here; I want to bring him in here to show him a picture."

"Why, certainly. Glad to have him come in. How is business, Tom?"

"It 's extra good," said Tom.

"Trade has improved under your management, has n't it?"

"It is better; but then, it had to be better or nothing at all."

"Here is the picture, Tom," said Laramie, showing him a large photograph that hung on the wall, of the "Flight into Egypt."

Tom looked at it a long time and heaved a sort of a sigh. "It must be nice to be able to come and look at it when you want to."

"Yes, it is. It is one man's idea of that particular scene, and one I like. Of course there are others."

Mr. Roslyn was grimly looking at Tom. He wanted to talk to him; wanted to have him stay there in the room and feel at ease; but he did not know how to manage it. Tom turned around to go, and faced the other side of the room. When in there before he had backed out, and had not seen that wall at all.

A life-size picture, an oil painting, hung on the wall in the best light possible, where Mr. Roslyn in his desk chair always faced it.

"My golly!"

Laramie started. Mr. Roslyn squared back his shoulders at the sudden exclamation.

"John! What 's *John* doin' here?"

Laramie did not dare to say a word. Mr. Roslyn's face was quite pale and had a very set look.

"What do you mean?"

Tom felt the strain in the atmosphere and supposed it was because he swore "golly."

"I thought it was John," he stammered. Then, bracing up to the occasion, "It looked alive, you

see, and I only saw the eyes. It does look like John, anyway, even if it is only a little fellar in a white dress."

He studied the picture attentively and no one said anything. A two-year old boy in a white dress, a little boy's dress. He held a small cane in both hands, a red cane, with a little white dog's head on it. The child's face was peculiarly serious and thoughtful; the eyes, as they looked unwaveringly from the canvas, were baffling in their childish solemnity. Nobody could guess the pain the look in those eyes had worked in David Roslyn's heart as he had sat in his office chair and looked at his boy's picture, the questions those eyes had asked him, the appeals they had made, the awful rebuke he conceived to rest in them because he had failed to bring him back.

"I can't help it," said Tom, decidedly. "It looks just like John, and there 's that there little cane, too. But I 'm sorry I had to go and be such a fool."

He started to move toward the door, but he was stopped. Mr. Roslyn had risen gently, led the boy around to his chair, sat down, and stationing him between his knees so that he faced the picture, kept both hands on him, and said in a quiet, repressed tone:

"That picture, Tom, is a picture of my only child, Winthrop Roslyn. His mother died when he was born; he was all I had—all. He was lost when he was two years old—that age. I do n't know how. I

never knew how. Now I want to know what boy you mean when you say some one looks like that?"

"Well, how did you ever go to work to lose a nice little fellar like that?" said Tom, still wrapped up in the picture and oblivious to the questions.

Mr. Roslyn began very patiently; he was n't dealing just with a boy now. His business instincts were at work.

"He had a nurse from the time of his birth, whom we all esteemed very highly. Her care for him seemed to be unremitting. She was faithfulness itself, and the child loved her. But, for all that, one afternoon he was allowed to play on the steps and walk, right out here in front of the house. In time I was sent for hastily, and he was gone. There was no doubt whatever in any one's mind of his immediate recovery. The whole force of the city was on the alert, detectives were at work at once. I expected him every minute—every minute, do you hear?" with a sharp clutch on Tom's arm that made him wince,—"and everything has been done ever since. But I do n't believe we ever had any real trace of him. Now tell me, Tom, do you know a boy like that?"

"Well, I should say I did! Nicest boy you ever saw; different from any other boy, but the best boy on earth."

"Has he parents?"

"No."

"When did they die?"

"Never had any, just lived with an old blind man and led him around till he was about seven years old."

Laramie stepped forward quickly to see if anything was the matter with her uncle, but he had remained immovable. It was well known in the family that his hopes had run the highest some seven years before over reports of a boy with a blind man. But it had all come to nothing.

"What does he look like?"

"Looks like that, just those eyes. Oh, different, maybe—thinner, you know."

"Is it a child that age?"

"Why, no! Must be eleven years old. Mother Lide says so. He 's shorter a little than me, and not so heavy."

"Whom does he live with?"

"Mother Lide. She 's kept him since he was seven years old."

"What for?"

"'Cause he needed it, I suppose. She 's kind, she is!"

"Do you know her?"

"My, yes! She 's let me live with her two years back. John and I, we slept in a little place together, and thought a lot of each other. You see, John, he was always so lonesome and different, folks liked him, but he did n't make up to people. The boys liked him, you know, but he never was in with them, nor around with them. He seemed so lonesome like, and

he was smart to talk, too, just with me and Kathie, and he was n't anybody's fool either. He knew bottom from top every time. But after he got to understanding about Jesus Christ he felt different. He turned around a good deal. He seemed to catch on to the idea that Jesus cared a heap for all our tenement folks and that if they were His friends he 'd better feel more as though they could be friendly to him, and he could be friendly to them. And he seemed to feel a lot better. Took more hold, you know."

"What about the cane?"

"Oh, he 's got that now. There 's no cane to it, nothing but that dog's head, and about an inch of stick. He loves it better than anything. He said he thought it was longer once, but he could n't remember it any way but that. It had red glass eyes till a boy picked one of them out. Now it 's only got one red glass eye. We look at it a lot when nobody 's around. Kathie loves it, too."

"Laramie."

Mr. Roslyn's voice sounded strange.

"Yes, uncle."

"Did n't I always say Winthrop would look very much when he was twelve or thirteen as he did when he was little?"

"Yes, uncle."

"He had that sort of a face. Tom, what is his name?"

"John."

"John what?"

"John Russ."

Laramie stepped forward with a low cry, scarcely daring to place her hand on her uncle's shoulder and yet longing to express her sympathy, her belief that at last something had come to pass.

Winthrop had always said his name was John. From the time he had first talked, and he was a startlingly precocious child about talking, he had unfailingly said his name was John; and when he added a second name the name was Russ, instead of Roslyn. His mother was a Winthrop, and Winthrop the boy was always called by his father and by others before his father, but Laramie well remembered people calling him "little John Russ."

"Laramie," said Mr. Roslyn, turning his head and looking at her with a drawn, tense face, and speaking in a desperately quiet voice, "I know it is Winthrop."

"I do, too, uncle," said Laramie, but she was afraid to say more.

"Whom is he with?" he asked again.

"Mother Lide."

"Was she kind to him?" wistfully.

"I should think she was! John was lucky, he was! Mother Lide often told us how she took him first. He lived in the tenement built onto our back. It opens onto the same court, but it's lots worse—awful

rotten concern; ours is good. The blind man died, I guess; anyway, John—he was only about seven—he was all alone and sick, and thin as thin could be, and could n't hold his head up, and she nursed him up and kept him right with her, and fed him the best she could get, and strengthened him up till he could get around, and then she kept him right along. She keeps an apple stand, and she had Kathie, too, and sometimes it was poor pickings and no great to wear, but John always had what there was, and covers nights. John was well off."

Tom had been held facing the picture; now he turned around squarely and looked into Mr. Roslyn's eyes.

"Mother Lide is Reddy's mother. If John is your boy, she did better by him than you was willing to do by Reddy."

A wave of color flushed Mr. Roslyn's face. For a moment he leaned his head on his hand. Laramie looked at Tom anxiously.

"I can't go to her for my boy unless I take her son," he said to himself. Then aloud, "Tom, get Reddy; we must start. Tell him I'll see to him; tell him anything you like. A train leaves at two o'clock in the morning, and we must take it; *must*, I say."

"Reddy is n't here."

"Is n't here?"

"No, sir. He could n't get anything to do. But

he 's promised he would go to a place that 's the next station from there on our road—just outside the city. If he got work there, I expect we could get him."

Mr. Roslyn was looking at a time-table. " Gets in there at 7.30. We can try it. Can get a train every few minutes from there. I 'll try that much. Now, Tom, you must stay right here and go with me on that train. I can't take the ten o'clock, and we could n't do anything until morning, anyway."

Tom looked aghast. What about the Bowers, and the hymn, and everything?

" I 've *got* to go back to Bower's."

" Why?"

" Why, I 've got to. They won't know where I am. I 'll come back."

"I 'm afraid to lose sight of you."

Laramie interposed at this juncture, and a few practical words reassured her uncle enough so that he very reluctantly consented to Tom's going. Tom's relief showed in every look he gave Laramie.

" Laramie, call your father. Tom, if you are going, go as soon as possible. I shall not be easy a minute until you are with me again."

" Nor after that, either," thought Laramie.

So Tom started on a run a second time from the Roslyns, as wildly excited as he could be at the thought of all that might happen to John, and at the thought of seeing them all, and Kathie, and of taking Reddy back again. Would Reddy be there?

CHAPTER XVI

THE TENEMENT

The Bowers were not prepared for the hot, breathless boy precipitated upon them as they sat on their back doorstep.

He told his story as coherently as he could, and by dint of a great many questions the Bowers finally gained a fairly comprehensive view of the situation. It was years since either of them had been much interested in anything outside of their own wretchedness, and the effect was highly tonic.

"Tom, I shall be so sorry to have you gone," said Mrs. Bower, and the tone expressed a world more than the words. "I wish you had something to wear."

Tom had been blessing himself at intervals because Reddy had not shaken him by his shirt, but he was also woefully conscious of the extreme danger both his garments were in of yawning dismally at some inopportune moment.

"Now, Tom," said Mr. Bower, in so decided a tone that his wife looked at him twice to see if it was the same man, "you 've been a good boy and you 've worked hard, and as for paying you, that 's out of the question, but I want you to take a dollar and buy you something before you go back to that house. It

would do me good to know you had bought something you wanted to have."

"Can I buy just what I please?"

"Yes, that 's what I want you to do."

"Well, I want to buy a knife."

Mr. Bower laughed out loud. He had n't laughed since before he dropped Willie, and Mrs. Bower started. Something about the knife made Mr. Bower think of some episode in his own boyhood. It pleased him. He was glad Tom wanted a knife. Mrs. Bower was disappointed. If Tom had only chosen to get something to wear! However, she was glad he was to have a dollar.

"I found out those words, Mr. Bower, and I 'm going to sing them and play them to you, and then I 'll have to go. I 'm coming back, though, to see you all, you can depend upon it."

But they did not believe it.

Tom sang the words, not once but three times, and Mr. Bower grew more and more thoughtful. It touched him. He believed it. He believed the boy. Perhaps there was a more hopeful way before him. His wife had known something about it. Perhaps they could make a new start. At least they could try. And it was in a very quiet, tender mood that they all said good-bye and wished good wishes and parted.

The first thing to do was to get the knife. The store he had always desired to go into to look at

knives was open, though there were no customers, and Tom walked boldly in, clutching his dollar.

"I want the very best knife—boy's knife—you can sell me for a dollar, with things in it."

He banged down his dollar on the counter, quite conscious that his appearance did not suggest the possession of a dollar.

The clerk laughed good-naturedly. "All right, sir. The best dollar knife it shall be."

He started to show some, then hastily replaced them, and said, "There, now, the very thing! You were born under a lucky star."

He took down a green box with just three knives in it.

"How's that for a beauty? Hoof-cleaner,"—opening everything up—"awl, corkscrew,—feel of that blade,—file, snippers; what do you think of that?"

"My," gasped Tom, "that's more 'n a dollar!"

"Two-dollar-and-a-half knife. Only three left, and the boss said to-night we'd put them in the window marked a dollar to-morrow morning; and you can just as well have one to-night. How'd you get your dollar?"

"I've been working for a grocery man that had his leg broke. I've got to go away and he gave me a dollar to buy something with. I wish I had some more money to get a name cut on that plate," looking at it a bit regretfully.

"What's the name?"

"Jed Cooper."

"Is that your name?"

"No, it 's the name of the boy I 'm going to give it to."

"That 's funny," said the clerk in surprise.

"Why, you see he gave me some cherry pie and other things, a spell back, when I was pretty near starved, and I 'm going to be in that place to-morrow morning, where he lives, and I thought if I could give him something I 'd be awful glad to do it."

"I can mark some myself, and if you like I can put J. C. on there; that won't take any time, and it will show it 's meant for him."

"Well, you are a good fellow!" burst out Tom.

The knife was marked, and Tom with a radiant smile of thanks started off on a dead run again.

Laramie was waiting out on the front steps.

"I 'm glad you are here," she laughed. "Uncle has kept me watching for you the last half hour."

When Tom had left the Roslyns, Laramie, her uncle and her father had adjourned to Miss Roslyn's room, which was the consultation room for all family matters, to explain what had happened. Miss Roslyn and Laramie agreed with Mr. David Roslyn that there was real reason for hope that this boy might prove to be Winthrop. Mr. David Roslyn, in fact, evidently paid not the slightest attention to any doubt on the subject. Conviction had been borne into his mind, and he was not disposed to argue the

matter. Laramie's father was more concerned for his brother's probable disappointment. The premises seemed very slight to him.

"At least, David," said Miss Roslyn, "if you contemplate going in the morning and taking Tom with you, he ought to have some clothes to go in. It 's a wonder his things stay on him."

"Can't you see to it, Laramie?" asked her uncle.

"Of course I can! I 'll have everything he needs right here in no time. Dinner has been served this fifteen minutes, did you know it?"

Laramie was something of an adept in buying boy's clothes, and her instincts informed her what sort of clothes Tom would be satisfied to wear to his old home. She had bought clothes for boys of his sort, age and size before, and she did not have to spend long in doing it.

When she returned, accompanied by a boy carrying her purchases, she found her uncle shut up with her father and his lawyer. The lawyer was hugely disgusted; that a business man like his client Roslyn should be so upset by a street boy's tale seemed incredible. It was all well enough for him to look up the matter, and to do so at once. That was business sense; but Roslyn believed it. He believed he was going to see his boy in the morning.

"Why, man, you 're wild," exclaimed the lawyer in his heat. He could not bear to think of the shock of disillusion.

"I say he will know me, if it is Winthrop!"

"Know you! He was lost before he was two years old."

"He was the smartest child any of our family or friends ever saw," replied Mr. Roslyn. "He seemed to know and understand everything. I used to talk to him about my business always."

"Well, I 'm sure he did n't talk back about it."

"He seemed to remember and know things. He talked younger than any child I ever heard of. He was n't like other children. I believe if it is Winthrop he will know me himself. But if he does n't, I shall know him. He had a face that could n't change much."

There was no use arguing with a man like that, and they returned to their papers and business matters and worked until late in the night.

Laramie took Tom up to a bath-room, showed him all the things he was to use, and the new clothes, and told him to come out in the hall when he was through.

When he appeared she gave a little exclamation of surprise.

"Why, Tom, how perfectly lovely you do look! How well it fits! Shoes big enough?"

It was exactly the sort of a suit Tom would have liked to buy himself, a double-breasted gray suit. The blouse collar was just the right sort of a sensible boy's collar, and the necktie was all right,

and the stockings were black, and the shoes were low tennis shoes, just such as the boys he knew who had shoes wore in summer, and the cap was an ordinary cap, just what he liked, and he was about as set up as he could be. In one pocket he had the new knife and in another his mouth-organ, and in his breast pocket a handkerchief.

"Clothes suit you, Tom?"

"I should just think they did. They're exactly right. You do know just about all there is to know!"

"Oh, of course," laughed Laramie. "All my friends see that at a glance. Now, young man, of course you are hungry, and it is late, and you will have to be routed out before you know where you are. Just come with me."

Down in the dining-room she set out before him the most extravagantly served meal in the way of cloth, cutlery and glass that it had ever been his lot to observe. The edibles were not to be despised, either, as he found on trying them.

"I don't eat this way every day," he chuckled. "It might be worse."

There was a cosy little nook off the hall, with a couch and pillows.

"Now, Tom, take off your shoes and your jacket and your waist and necktie. Then lie down there and go to sleep. I'll call you in time enough to get them all on again."

She went back again after a while; Tom was

sound asleep. The shaded light in the hall threw a soft light on the boy. She looked at him a moment. She did not know that he had gone to sleep with his heart full of tumultuous thanks to the Friend who cared, and who knew it all, and who could be trusted, no matter what the outcome of the morrow; but she guessed it, and she went away glad that the news of the boy John had come through this boy. It seemed the best sort of an omen.

The rising in the night, the stir in the house, the cups of bouillon, the warm, half-tearful farewells, the rattling away to the station in a hack, the unbroken silence of Mr. Roslyn, the elegance of the sleeping-car, the obsequiousness of the porter, the mysteries of the top berth just above Mr. Roslyn,—the kaleidoscopic effect of that night in Tom's memory was not soon overcome. And in the morning it was almost as strange: the washing and dressing in the toilet-room, the leaving the car at that last station before reaching the city, the silent impatience of Mr. Roslyn—Tom could not be sure he was really awake except when he felt that new knife in his pocket.

If it had not been so early, too early to really accomplish anything, Mr. Roslyn would have thought twice about trying to take Reddy with him. As it was, one effort could be made with very little loss, and perhaps with some gain.

"This must be your affair, Tom," said Mr. Roslyn. "You must go to the place where he promised to go,

see if he is there or has been there, or, if possible, where he has gone. If you see him you must get him to come with us, for this one day at least. Now, you can't take too long; an hour and a half at the outside."

"All right, sir," and Tom set off at a good pace down the street to the road.

He was soon at the place where they had all sat that morning, and then he struck off across lots toward the aunt's house, as he called it in his mind. Just as he reached a fence which gave him a view of the house, he saw a familiar figure coming toward him. Tom leaped from the fence and dashed on.

"Reddy!" he shouted.

Reddy was walking, looking at the ground. He raised his head and stopped short.

There was n't any use in saying anything. To see Tom there at that juncture was peculiar enough, but such a Tom, shoes and stockings and everything!

"Am I crazy, or are you?" said Reddy.

Tom had grasped Reddy's arm.

"Now, say; what you think? I've come for you!"

"Oh, have you?" was the reply. "What else?"

"No fooling, Reddy. Did you get work at the aunt's house?"

"Yes; she's a good woman and no mistake. She gave me a job, but she said to begin with that it would n't last no longer than day before yesterday.

Then she kept me on two more days, so I'd get a little more pay, and she's been mighty kind and good. She's most awful stirring and a most uncommon hand to preach, but a downright good woman, and I hope I pleased her."

"And now what you going to do?"

"Well, I was starting out to walk back to the city. Seems as though I was just drawn there. I like the noise of cars and wagons and bells, and lots of people, but it makes me most crazy to hear chickens and cows and crickets and tree-toads and all these things people out here don't hear at all. I like a city—brick sidewalks, you know."

"So do I. Don't give me no country in my lot, 'cept just to see it once in a while! What was you going to do in the city?"

"Tom," earnestly, "am I fit for anything but a bartender? Now just answer me that."

"You 'll do no bar-tending," laughed Tom, though he gripped Reddy's arm tighter.

"Where 'd you steal all those dude clothes, Tom?"

"Do you know the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co., Reddy, where I traded for Bower?"

"Well, don't I?" with an amused smile. "We did n't get to hear about much else from you!"

"Mr. Roslyn owns that. He wants me to take him to Mother Lide because he thinks John, a boy that lives with her, and that I told him about, is his boy. He lost one when he was little."

"Oh, come off! Why did n't you tell him you were the boy?"

"And even though you did n't tear my shirt that night, I reckon he thought I might come to pieces on the road. I told him Mother Lide's son was working here, and he wanted you to go along back with us to-day, if you could get off work or was n't working."

"Tom, get at the facts, and quick, or you 'll wish you had."

"I am, Reddy. That is exactly so. He 's waiting at the station up here, and would n't give me long. He 's in a hurry. You come now with me and act like a man, and I swear to it you 'll get a place in his wholesale store, or somewhere, and just get a first-class start. It 'll be the making of you and Mother Lide and Kathie."

"Tom, does he know about me?"

"Yes, he knows all about you. He knows it was you and Brown burgling his house. That was his house."

"The dickens it was!"

"He knows all about it, and his mind 's so full of his boy he do n't care for anything else on earth, and he wants you to come on back to your mother, and if you show any back-bone at all you 'll find this will be the making of you, whether John turns out to be his boy or not. Now say Yes, and do n't keep me in such a fuss. You can't lose a thing by going, and

you 'll spoil everything all around if you do n't go."

"Bless you, Tom, you do n't have to urge so," said Reddy, rather slowly. "I promised your—your Friend, this morning, that I 'd try through this one day, anyway, and that the first thing that turned up that was honest I 'd lay hold of, so I reckon I 'll have to," with a laugh.

"Good for you, Reddy! now we are all right," and he could n't help thinking, "I need n't have been so anxious with You beside me."

"Say, Reddy, I want to see Jed Cooper just a minute."

"All you 'll have to do will be to look at him, then. You 're the kind of a fellow, you know, where wanting a thing is having it."

Reddy whirled Tom around by the shoulders, and there, perched on a fence some twenty feet away, was Jed staring at them.

"Hello, Jed!" shouted Tom. "Know me? I 'm going into the city on the next train, but I want to see you."

Jed, broadly smiling, descended from his post as Tom reached him.

"Here, Jed, here 's a present for you. Is n't she a beauty, though? Look at that," and he whipped out the hoof-cleaner and the corkscrew and the awl and the snippers and the blades as fast as any clerk ever did, while Jed's eyes all but popped out of his head.

"Got your name on it, see? Good-bye; I got to hurry!"

Jed took the knife, staring, but he had not said a word.

"Good-bye," said Tom, and rejoining Reddy he walked rapidly away with him.

"Hello, Tom, I say!" shouted Jed, and as Tom looked back, "Thank you! Thank you no end! Good-bye!"

Reddy did some busy thinking on his way back to the station. He did not like anything about it. He did not like having to run the risk of facing Mr. Roslyn; he did not like being taken back to his mother, but he had the feeling that he had promised, and stick to it he would.

"After all," he thought, "perhaps it really is a new start. Perhaps I'll begin fresh now; and I know well enough I could n't begin and go on well until I had seen my mother."

His heart was rebelliously hungry to see her and hear her voice, and there was a certain relief about having the matter taken out of his hands.

Mr. Roslyn was striding up and down the station. He was pleased for a moment to see Tom and Reddy. One thing more had gone smoothly, and that seemed favorable, but his preoccupation was too great to permit of any further attention to either of them. Tom was afraid Mr. Roslyn would walk to the city, he seemed so impatient, but finally the train came

and they whirled away in to the familiar Central station. The very boys were known to Tom; the excitement of it all crowded upon him. His heart exulted. His thought outran itself and he had seen the tenement and all the people before they were out of the station.

Mr. Roslyn saw that they all had a little something to eat right there at the station, and then a hack rattled them off to the old tenement.

"Will John be there now?" asked Mr. Roslyn in that same quiet, strained voice.

"He will be if he has got back from helping Mother Lide go to the stand."

They got out at the tenement.

"Hello, Jim! I'm back! Hello, Sally! Hello, Jenny! And look at the Corrigans!" Tom was wild with delight.

The children, astonished at the hack, at the handsome gentleman, and, more than all, at Tom's fine array, stood awed and silent, staring. As they went up the stairs, doors on the landings were opened and people peered out at the procession of three.

Tom opened the door of Mother Lide's room. There sat Kathie in the same old chair by the window. She looked bewildered, then cried out, "Tom!"

"Kathie!" and he ran to her, seizing her hands, and shaking them, and laughing, and nearly crying, while she, the same excitable little Kathie, laughed and cried all at once.

"Oh, Tom, I'm so glad! Oh, Tom, how splendid you look! Oh, Tom!" and then she saw the tall, dignified, gray-haired gentleman standing in the doorway and the slender young fellow behind.

"This is Mr. Roslyn, Kathie. He's John's father —at least, we think so. Kathie is John's best friend, Mr. Roslyn."

Mr. Roslyn came gravely across the floor to the little damsel and took the thin little hand in his. The respite given him when he saw no boy in the room was after all a blessing. He must still that suffocation in his heart.

"Sit down, Mr. Roslyn, please," said Kathie in her sweet little timid way, and Mr. Roslyn found he could smile into the blue eyes.

"Come, Reddy," said Tom. "Kathie, he's your Uncle Billy. Looks just like you, too."

"Are you Reddy?" asked Kathie delightedly. "Oh, how nice! Won't grannie be happy!"

Reddy found that there was something in blood, after all. He had a glad, warm feeling when he looked at the little girl, and he thought of twenty things all in a minute that he would like to do for her.

"Mother Lide and John at the stand, Kathie?"

"Yes. Oh, Tom, we're going to have our flower show to-night—this afternoon and evening. I said right along I knew you'd have to be here. I just said to God every night to please have you back.

You know that's the way Emily always did. Don't they look splendid?"

The plants did indeed look very flourishing, but Tom couldn't stop to examine them. He knew he must get Mother Lide and John there very quickly from the way Mr. Roslyn was beginning to look at him.

"If you will wait here, Mr. Roslyn, I can run to the stand and get them both back very quick."

Waiting was poor work, but it seemed the best way.

Tom looked at Reddy imploringly.

"You'll act fair, won't you, Reddy?"

"Oh, I'll stay," said Reddy. "I want to talk to Kathie. I want to know all about the plants."

He was anxious if he did stay to keep up a steady conversation with Kathie. To be at the mercy of a man whose house he had tried to rob was uncomfortable, to say the least.

Tom was stopped a dozen times on his way down the stairs, while questions poured in on him. He was actually grabbed and held tight by more than one woman determined to know about things. But he was a quick-witted boy, and good-natured as well, so he managed to satisfy them in some sort of a way without losing very much time, and he was soon darting along the familiar streets to the stand.

"Oh, Mother Lide," he shouted.

She threw her arms around him with a good, warm hug, and cried out,—"And Tommie, darlin', is

it you? I 'm after losin' my wits with joy. Faith, and I 'll hug you again if you do n't stand off! Johnnie, did you ever see the like of him? It 's a young prince he is. And have you been adopted?"

Tom was shaking John's hands and they were gazing smilingly at each other without a word to say.

"I 'm back," said Tom at last.

"Good enough, too, I say," answered John.

"And saw you Kathie?" asked Mother Lide.

"Indeed I did."

"And Tommie," hesitated Mother Lide, "do you remember what you wrote in your letter?"

"Do n't I?" and Tom's eyes snapped with fun.

"And how is he—my bye?"

"You come on home and you 'll see."

The withered, rosy old face worked pitifully but controlled itself finally.

"Tommie, I 'm thinkin' you 've been the blessin' of my life."

"But see here, Mother Lide. There 's more, a good deal, and John, you listen, too. John, do you remember your father?"

"He was n't my father, Tupelo was n't," said John shortly.

"I do n't mean that old dago. I mean your *father*. Do you remember him?"

John shook his head. "I dream of him a lot—always have, but I can't remember about it when I wake up—only just know it."

"Do you remember Miss Roslyn I told you about? Well, her uncle lost his boy, a little bit of a boy, and I saw his picture, and it looked just like you, and I told him so, and in the picture the boy had a little cane, and the head of the cane was just like yours. Let 's see it."

John pulled it out of his pocket—the little ivory dog's head with a silver collar and one red eye.

"That 's it, sure! He 's a stunning sort of a man, John, but I won't say any more about that. He 's come to see if it 's you, or, if you 're him—or, land, he 's come to find out, and he 's back home there with Kathie, waiting. And say, Mother Lide, if Reddy will take hold any, your Billy I mean, Mr. Roslyn will set him on his feet and give him a good job, and make a man of him sure as fate, so it 's a windfall for you, too. If Reddy would n't hang off so, Mr. Roslyn would like him, I know. You 'll just have to come back now. Is n't it the greatest go you ever heard of?"

"Faith, and I 'm thinkin' it 's one of the miracles! My head 's clean turned around on my body," and Mother Lide talked unceasingly the whole way, but John was silent and troubled.

Mr. Roslyn had made a desperate effort to overcome his indifference to his surroundings, and to gather his faculties in some sort of order for the coming ordeal; he had so far succeeded that he was talking intelligently with Kathie and Reddy, and

by a strong concentration was endeavoring to gauge Reddy, his will power, his intentions, and his mental attitude.

"Here they come," cried Kathie, clapping her hands; and a deadly silence fell on both Reddy and Mr. Roslyn. They stared at the door as if fascinated.

It opened, and Mother Lide, utterly forgetting all her intentions of curtseying to the gentleman and making a suitable speech, rushed with a cry toward Reddy.

The smooth, boyish face was not so very changed, the light in the blue eyes and the smile were quite the same, and Reddy's heart was full; he thought he could n't stand it. He got his mother into his chair, and knelt beside her with his arms around her and his face buried in her lap, while she fondled his hair and sobbed out all manner of endearing expressions and childish names, and crooned over him some relic from old Celtic lullabys.

Tom saw it all with a full heart, and so did Kathie, her eyes big with sympathy; but John stood in the doorway, his eyes never wavering from Mr. Roslyn's; searching, solemn, questioning eyes, the very eyes that had burned their way into his father's soul from the canvas so many days and nights.

Mr. Roslyn knew. No one on earth could have told him those were not his boy's eyes.

"Come," he said in a low, pleading tone. He must n't frighten the little fellow. "Come."

And John moved slowly toward him, never taking

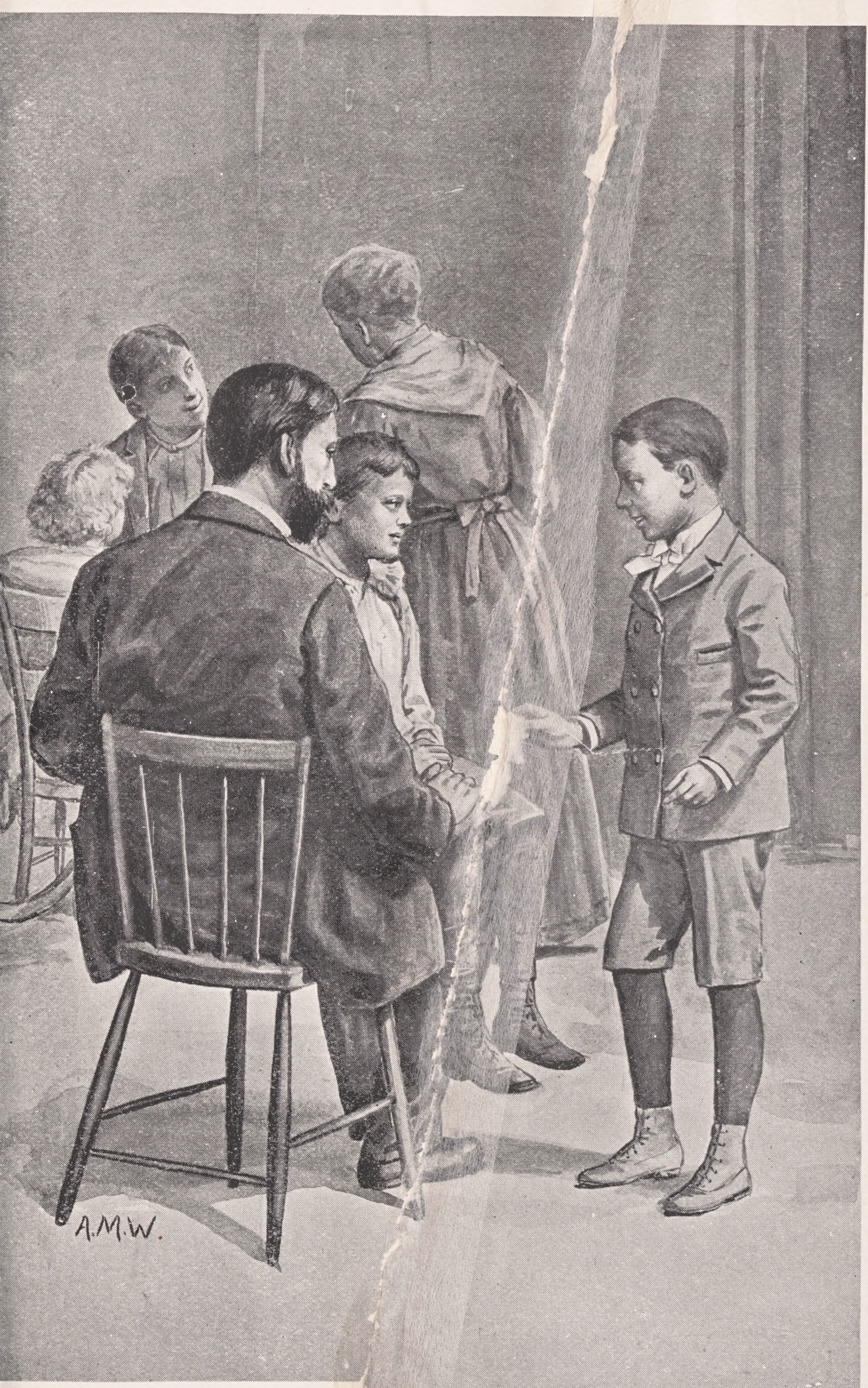
his eyes from his father's; then, as he reached him, touched his knee, and his father, endeavoring to be gentle, but terribly afraid lest when he tried to take the boy there should be nothing there, as had happened so many, many times before, grasped each of the thin arms.

John's face flushed and paled, and two great tears rolled down his cheeks.

"I do remember," he said. "I do. I do. I do remember."

It was all his father wanted that he should not be afraid; and he gathered him into his arms, held him close to his breast, and was quiet, except for the violent throbbing of his heart. He did not ever want to let him loose. The room at the top of the tenement was good enough for him—let the world stop. But that was succeeded by a desire to see this boy of his, by a sudden fear lest he had changed in that moment's embrace. He held John off on his knee and looked at him. It was a pathetic face for a father to look at, thin and wistful and unchildish. Then John smiled and his father started, gave a slight exclamation, and clasped him tightly again, afraid he might lose him.

"You smile just like your mother. You never were like your mother in looks, and it hurt me that you were not, but, oh, my boy, my little boy, you smiled just like your mother. You don't know your name is Winthrop, do you?"



THE TWO REUNIONS.

John shook his head, but his eyes looked troubled again.

"John Russ, I think," he said slowly.

"Yes, dear little John Russ. Roslyn the name is."

"Show him the dog's head," said Tom, seeing a chance to say something.

John pulled out the dog's head. His father remembered it very well. He looked at it with a mist before his eyes. He remembered buying it. He remembered the little fellow's pleasure in it, how he slept with it and fed it at the table.

"I must keep it myself, dear," he said. "I'm afraid. I'm afraid I'll wake up and you'll be gone."

He laughed and John smiled sympathetically.

"That's the way it always happened to me. You always went when I woke up," said the boy, and his father held him close again.

Then he remembered that there were others and became aware that Reddy was sitting beside his mother, holding her hand and talking. It was like the joining of electric currents, those two natures so alike, so impulsive, so warm, so quick, so intensely affectionate.

"We have each found a son, Mrs. — Mrs."—

"Lidedell," supplemented Reddy. "I'll never be fool enough to leave my mother again," he added warmly.

"I hope not, my boy. You could not make a worse mistake. Mrs. Lidedell, if you can tell me any facts regarding my son, anything you know of him before he came into your hands, I would be glad to have you do so now."

"Faith, then, Mr. Roslyn, it's little to tell I'm knowin.' An old, blind Italian, named Tupelo or some such name, lived in our back tenement. He was the only Italian in the court, and nobody liked it, but he stayed. The boy was a lonesome, forlorn mite of a boy, that everybody pitied and had a good word for; but Tupelo was n't getting many good words. I was sorry for him and did him a bit turn now and then. He needed it, for he was failin', and I asked about the boy, and he said a woman had him in the place he come from, and she was terrified about somethin', and she sold the boy to him to lead him, glad to have him taken out of the place; and that's all ever he told me. And a sick little fellow he was when he came to me, and a good boy he's been always—unnatural good. It's a sad day it will be for Kathie when you take John."

"Oh, Kathie!" John wanted to ask how could he leave Kathie, but something kept him still.

But Kathie sobbed, and the tears ran down her cheeks, and she looked like some pale little dew-washed flower. It had been dreadful without Tom, even when she was expecting him home every day, and now to have John gone, knowing he would

never come back, and Tom gone, too. For she was sure that, dressed as he was, his fortune must lie in other places. A realization of her desolation swept over her intense little soul, and she could not be comforted.

"I know—Emily—never had such a trouble as this!" she sobbed to Tom, who was vainly trying to staunch her tears. "And—and the flower-show we were going to have this afternoon!"

"Why, the flower-show will go on, Kathie, I"—began John—but he stopped suddenly.

Mr. Roslyn could see what was the matter. There must be no heart-breaking about this new happiness. If he had his boy he had enough, and he could set himself to straightening out this tangle as well as in him lay.

"Tell me about it, Kathie, and you too, John." He thought it would be better not to add a strange name to his own strangeness. "Tell me about the flower-show."

"Kathie has been raising flowers from the seed and from slips," said John, in his quiet, direct way. "Tom and I helped her start, and when they were large enough we planned to have a flower-show down in the court, and sell them all for a nickel apiece. All the court is expecting it. Mother Lide was to come home early, and Kathie was to go down, and it was to be great doings."

"*Is* to be," said Mr. Roslyn, crushing down all

his eager impatience. "You are that much better off, are n't you, little girl? Do n't cry. Look at the bright side of it. Here is your brother back,—uncle, is it?—and Tom is here—and I must see it, too, and surely you will let me buy some. The only thing I ask is that, as Mrs. Lidedell will surely not be going back to business now, we must have it early."

"My hothouse man, Mr. McGregor, is coming, too," said John proudly. He had one friend he could be proud to show his father. What his father had done and said about the flower-show had made John's heart swell with love. It seemed so kind, so good. Oh, if he could only be like that!

Tom would not have believed it possible. He looked at Mr. Roslyn with different eyes.

"Now, Mrs. Lidedell, our time to talk business will be short, I see, and you, too, Reddy—I prefer your real name."

"William."

"And you, too, William, must discuss some of these matters with us. My indebtedness to you, Mrs. Lidedell, is far more than I could ever hope to repay in any way, and I hope I may be able to settle on some plan, with the aid of all here, that will substantially prove my gratitude; but without reference to that at present I desire to lay before you a half-formed plan in regard to your son, William. At his age, he should already be estab-

lished in some creditable way of earning a livelihood. He is a smart, bright boy, and provided—mark, William, I say *provided*—he has the strength of will and the principle to choose an honest course and adhere rigidly to it, there is no reason why he should not be not only a credit to you but a satisfaction to his employers. My idea, Mrs. Lidedell, is to take William back to my city with me now, put him at once at work suitable to his abilities and strength, and advance him just as fast as he is able to stand it. Should this be agreeable to you, and to you, William, I will arrange further details when I decide on the fitting work."

Reddy had been listening with his eyes fixed on the floor. Could he take hold and work? Could he get over that restless desire for the excitements he had accustomed himself to? Could he start in a fair, open, aboveboard way and work—work until he was thoroughly tired, and begin again, day after day, and keep it up, and not fail wretchedly, to the grief of all?

He remembered his promise of the morning to Tom's Friend. His heart longed for help; it cried out piteously for strength, and the strength seemed to come. "Be my friend, Lord Christ," he thought reverently and yearningly. "Come to me, too!"

He raised his eyes, and Tom, who had been looking at him, his heart one prayer to his Friend to help Reddy, wondered at the clear, purified light he beheld there.

"I will be glad to try, Mr. Roslyn," he said, and Mr. Roslyn thought, "I believe there 's something in the boy, after all."

"We will take the five o'clock train back, and as I have matters of importance to attend to I will go now for a time, taking John with me. Tom, you will stay here, of course, and run the flower-show. That must begin at two o'clock, and you must notify the whole court to turn out. How many should you say there were in the court, Tom,—everybody?"

Tom could tell with tolerable accuracy, and Mr. Roslyn realized with wonder what a human hive the three jammed-in tenements made.

"We will be here on time. And you must be ready, William, to leave at 4.30 from here. I will have a hack."

Mother Lide was still the victim of alternate smiles and tears. Her tears were not like Kathie's. Her fountains had been dried up; but the old eyes grew dim and she must needs use her apron to wipe them with great frequency.

"Come, John," said Mr. Roslyn. "Come," and his voice was so tender it faltered; "we must go now, but we will soon be back."

He held John's hand; he had not let go of him once, but he stopped Tom by the door and said in a low tone:

"I want you to go back with us to-night, Tom. I 'll give you a place in the store as soon as you are

through at Bower's, or right off if that wasn't a regular engagement."

Tom's eyes shone. A place in the Capital Wholesale Grocery store was the height of his ambition just at present; but he said very decidedly, though regretfully,

"I can't; I really can't! Mother Lidie couldn't get along now without either John or me to help her to and from the stand, and Kathie would cry herself sick without anybody. I'll have to stay. But you're awful, awful good. I'll never forget it!"

Mr. Roslyn paused a moment; then the smile in his eyes as he looked down into Tom's brown ones took away the sting of regret.

"That will be better. It will make very little difference. We will all be together in one town soon, I think." He held out his hand and held Tom's brown one firmly in his clasp. It seemed easy enough to handle a boy now. He felt as though Tom really belonged to him.

"You little scamp of a burglar, you!" he said in a low voice, and laughed slightly.

CHAPTER XVII

AT HOME

"Can you get used to the name of Winthrop, John?" asked his father as they went down the tenement house stairs, well aware that at every door was a crowd of curious watchers.

"I can get used to anything you say, I think," said John, shyly; and his father determined not to try to talk with that boy of his, lest he should break down right on the street.

Of course, clothes constituted the first matter of importance. An outfit was bought, John was initiated into a Turkish bath, and in due time from the hands of barber, barber, and gentlemen's outfitter there evolved a very well dressed, well gotten-up boy, a boy with an unusually intelligent, attractive face, but with the most disconcertingly philosophic eyes.

Dinner and a rest while they both talked gave Mr. Roslyn a feeling of greater assurance, and it was with less reluctance than he had believed possible that they set out for the final trip to the tenement. They stopped at the hothouse that they might tell Mr. McGregor the flower-show was to be earlier.

"Shall I buy some more pots of plants for Kathie to sell, John?"

"Oh, no! Perhaps they would be prettier, and it would make Kathie feel bad to see people wanting them most; but if she could have some cut flowers to give away with each pot she sold, or to sell, I know she would like that."

"Very well, cut flowers it shall be!"

Mr. Roslyn gave a most lavish order for immediate delivery. The man who waited on them was well used to John's face, and he looked at them in open bewilderment.

"I'd like to see Mr. McGregor," said John shyly.

"He's in yon," said the man, pointing to one of the houses.

John went in, followed by Mr. Roslyn.

"Mr. McGregor, the flower-show is going to be earlier. Will it make any difference about your coming?"

"Suit me better," said Mr. McGregor, turning around. "Havers, John, but you're a changed laddie! Is it you?"

"Yes, sir—this is—my—father."

Mr. Roslyn shook hands warmly with the gardener. The strong Scotch face attracted him. It was somewhat compensating to find that his boy had known a man like that in a place so beautiful.

"I wad scarcely have believed the lad had a father," said Mr. McGregor, doubtfully. The situation was explained to him, and he shook hands with John and said some words of congratulation. "But I'm

no concealin' it's a bit disappointin' to me," he continued to Mr. Roslyn. "The lad's so fond of flowers and so biddable, and so discernin', and so winnin' to the heart, that I had come to the notion of gettin' him in here with me to learn the business, and I had a fine vision of him growin' up to own a part, and bein' a man to look up to. Well, I'm no sayin' you can't do well by him yoursel'."

John's eyes shone at his description. Acting very impulsively for him, he took one of the gardener's hands with both his and held it. He scarcely dared say how proud he would have been of such a chance.

"He will think he has lost the opportunity of his life, Mr. McGregor," said Mr. Roslyn. "We will try not to let this acquaintance fall through. I hope to have some talk with you if possible at the flower-show this afternoon. Come, John, we still have a good deal to do."

"Now, John," when again in the street, "we have to leave at half past four, and I want to order enough ice-cream and cake for the whole tenement to be served there when we go. You can give a little pleasure to your friends perhaps."

"Oh! How—how kind you are," and John's eyes were filled with a sort of wistful admiration that unnerved his father again. He must get used to those eyes in some way.

They had enough things to do. John, after being urged by his father to say something he wanted to do before leaving, confided to him that he would like to leave presents for the babies he had minded, and the best things of all he bought for Hans Kraf, knowing that Tom would see to getting them out there. Kathie had selected her very nicest pots of flowers, three of them, for Frau Kraf and Gretchen and Hans, and John knew Tom would take them out as soon as possible.

When they reached the tenement they found that a great deal had been accomplished. The court had been quite extensively cleaned up, and a good many women had brought down chairs that they might sit and chat and hold their babies; a great many people had already gathered and people in a state of preparation for descent could be seen at all the windows. The children for the most part showed some attempt at finery and adornment. Reddy and Tom and a few scattering assistants had erected a booth for Kathie, constructed of boxes and ironing-boards and a couple of sheets. The pots of flowers, freshly watered, stood in sturdy array and aroused the most flattering comments.

Kathie, in her clean, faded dress, with her reddish curls most painstakingly brushed, and wearing her hat lest she might never have another chance to do so, was beamingly happy, seated in her chair back of her flower-pots. She knew John would come

soon, and that was the only thing lacking to her complete happiness. Mother Lide sat near the booth where she could look at and talk to Kathie, though her eyes rarely wandered from Reddy, who was facing it out before the tenement with rising pluck and spirits, and was already winning complimentary remarks from many of the women.

Young Mrs. Mulhaley was there, avowing her intention to be the first purchaser when the show opened.

"And, Tom, I 'm that glad to see you back," she said to him, and as he looked at her with a certain understanding and questioning in his eyes, she added in a low voice, "I 'd never want anybody to know I said so, but I 'll always believe you helped me that night. Joe 's clean swore off since then, and though they chaff him frightful, he sticks right to it. I 've wanted to tell you."

He smiled and was glad, for he had always liked Joe Mulhaley and his pretty wife.

The great box of cut flowers came for Kathie, and Reddy kept off onlookers while Tom and Kathie, scarcely able to repress their excitement, opened it in the most secluded spot they could find. That John had known what Kathie would like was instantly proven by Kathie laying out a flower to give away with each pot. They made two large bunches to go on the stand, and Tom arranged them in two pickle-jars. Their appearance at each end of the

lines of pots raised a tremendous hubbub in the court. The rest they made into small bunches to sell for a cent and two cents a bunch, and laid them in water.

"It was John, was n't it?" whispered Kathie.

"Mr. Roslyn," said Tom. "John 's got no money."

"My, what a kind man! Don't you wish he 'd stayed away and left John here?"

"I would n't have been back now if he had."

Kathie clutched him tightly. "Well, I guess it 's better as it is. John certainly needs a father." She endeavored to speak resignedly.

"Oh, yes, it 's better," and Tom's eyes danced with fun. There never was such an entertaining little girl as Kathie, he was sure.

The magic hour arrived when the sale was to open, and the only regret with everybody was that it must needs so soon be over. The children filed up with their five-cent pieces or their pennies, and proudly carried away their little cans of greenery, usually hurrying away with them to a safe place before accident befell the treasures, and it was not long before many of the windows looking out on the court were graced with a little plant flaunting its green leaves as bravely as though the heavy air of the court was good for flowers.

Mr. McGregor came, and his eyes lighted with professional interest.

"It 's a grand thing they 've done, Mr. Roslyn! It 'll be better than if some one had come in with a high air and given a five-dollar bill to every one. There 's a grand power in flowers, sir."

Mr. Roslyn kept well in the background, where he saw he belonged. As it drew near time to go, he motioned to Reddy and Reddy talked with his mother. There is no great opportunity for privacy in a tenement. Much goes on in plain sight that others could not bring themselves to reveal. And Reddy made nothing of taking as demonstratively an affectionate leave of his mother as though they had been quite alone.

But John had little to say.

"Good-bye, Kathie. Good-bye, Mother Lide. Good-bye, Tom."

That was all there was to it.

"John," said his father, "if you wish to, you ought to say good-bye to the others, and tell them you want them to enjoy the ice-cream. It 's just coming."

It wasn't in John's line at all to do such a thing, but he had been trying to look at things differently, of late, and his father's suggestion would have been enough in any case. All the crowd had seen that they were about to leave; they were rather expecting something to happen, so that every one was quiet, and looked at John as he stood by the booth, and in his very clear, quiet, easily heard voice said:

"You have all been very kind to me, and I shall remember you all. There is some ice-cream and cake coming now for everybody, and I hope you will like it. Good-bye."

And how they cheered and clapped, and the children whooped, and shouted cheers for John and for the ice-cream, and some of the women cried, and many called out:

"Good luck go wid you, Johnnie!" "May you keep your health!" "A long life!" "The blessed saints preserve you!" and many more.

There was something about it that unnerved John, and as the three stepped into the hack, crowded around by the whole court, his eyes were so misty he could see no one distinctly, and a half-suppressed sob escaped him. His father had his arm around him. Reddy had backed out and got up on the box with the driver, and at last Mr. Roslyn felt as though he had his boy to himself, his very own.

On the train he found himself obliged to face the problem of identification. If the others could not recognize John as he could, and there was not the least reason in the world to suppose that they could, unless they had remembered his mother's smile longer than was likely, his reasons for believing so absolutely that John was Winthrop were somewhat slight. The name, a very ordinary one, and the more important cane-head were all. However, let any one deny it who dared! John had fallen asleep,

and his father gazed with an absorbed interest at the thin, well cut face. He could not get his fill of it. It was incredible that surcease of that aching sense of loss had come at last. He sighed through very content.

He wrote a note, addressed it, and gave it to Reddy.

"William, when we get in go to this address and deliver the note. This is a boarding-house solely for the employés of our establishment who have no homes in the city, and care to patronize it. As a matter of fact it is very eagerly sought for, as terms are better, and accommodations also, than can possibly be found elsewhere. This note will settle your right to admittance at once, and you will be made thoroughly comfortable. Report to this address," giving him another note, "at eight o'clock sharp to-morrow, and I myself will see you some time during the forenoon.

"Now, William, let me speak very earnestly. Any lad accustomed, as you have been, to little or no authority, and to no business discipline, will weary of and be endlessly annoyed by the constant orders, the supervision, and the necessity for unerring promptness and accuracy. I know this. I fear it. Let me urge you to determinedly put down all such feelings. Let me urge you to stick manfully to all requirements, and endeavor to meet them rather than to oppose them. Believe me, if you heed this warning

you will find that restlessness leave you; the irksomeness will wear off, and you will become a thoroughly reliable business man, for you have the makings of it in you. Let this be enough. Let your mother be proud of her son!"

He held out his hand, and Reddy, with scarcely perceptible hesitation, clasped it. He knew just what Mr. Roslyn meant, and how much he needed it.

"Just help me," he pleaded, to his soul's Friend. "Just help me stick it out until I want to myself."

A telegram had announced a successful return to the Roslyn household, for Mr. Roslyn wanted his boy to come back to a welcoming home. If he had had a fatted calf he would have wanted it prepared for the occasion. As it was, such as they had must be made ready.

And so, though when they reached the house no other house in the deserted street was still awake, their house was a blaze of light from top to bottom.

Miss Roslyn rarely left her room, but she was down-stairs. Laramie and her father were anxiously waiting. Mr. Roslyn Lee, a connection of the family in the employ of the Capital Wholesale Grocery Co., and the young man who had fired the successful shot at Reddy, was also waiting to see the new relative.

They had found a deal to talk about at first, but as the hour grew late silence fell on the little group, and when through the open windows and door came the crash of the hack-wheels, they hurried out to the

entrance, apprehension striving with expectancy for the first place in their minds.

There was the hurried exit from the hack, the word or two with the driver at the door, and the clink of change, the slender little lad looking up at the brilliantly lighted house, while his father never let go of him for an instant; then up the steps they came, and Mr. Roslyn broke the spell with a hearty call.

"All well? Here we are! Come, Winthrop. I'm going to show him to Mary first. Is she down?"

It relieved them all to have Miss Roslyn the first one to commit herself, but as John passed Laramie he saw her looking at him with such a bright, amused smile that he involuntarily smiled back.

"I do just believe it is little John Russ!" she was startled into thinking. She had lived at the house a great deal during the first two years of his life, and had dearly loved her little kinsman.

"Mary," said Mr. Roslyn tenderly, "I wanted Winthrop to see you first, and get his first welcome from you."

John timidly extended his hand, his eyes questioning hers.

"God be praised!" she said fervently. "It is my little John Russ."

His face brightened wonderfully. He was not at all sure about being Winthrop Roslyn, but he knew very well he was little John Russ.

Miss Roslyn kissed him, and he liked it, and wondered why.

"Now, Henry, here's your nephew."

"God bless you and keep you," said Mr. Roslyn, in a deeply moved voice, holding John's hand in one of his and placing a hand on the boy's head so that he could look long and searchingly at his face.

"I do not know the boy's face, David, but he looks as a Roslyn should; and his eyes are surely like the picture."

"Laramie, you will be friends with him, I know!"

Laramie knew a great deal toc much to be elaborate in such a melèe.

"It's a wonder he can endure it," she thought, so she merely smiled and shook hands, but found a minute to whisper, "How's Tom, John? All right?"

He gave her a quick, grateful, recognizing look, and nodded. But she knew and he knew, that there was common ground between them. Young Roslyn Lee acquitted himself creditably, and then they all adjourned to the supper-room.

The strain had been sufficiently relieved to render them all very talkative, and before they left the table John found himself enjoying things immensely. He liked everything; the very appearance of the rooms set him at his ease; the table furnishings seemed to be exactly right; he liked the way these people talked, the tones of their voices, the humor, wit,

kindliness of what they said. He seemed to fit in so well, and feel so at home, that quite unconsciously he found himself making those dry, quiet, comprehensive remarks that had always made him such good company to Kathie and Tom. His father was delighted. He had seen nothing of that kind before. The boy felt at home, and at once; that he had supposed to be impossible, and all the others were equally aware of it.

"This is certainly turning night into day," said Laramie's father. "And, David, you have been at it now over forty hours without rest. This must stop."

A room adjoining Mr. Roslyn's had been fixed for John, as well as the brief time allowed. When he went into it, and his father stayed with him until he was in bed, a clean, delicious bed, in a wonderful night-garment that felt too good to be believed in, in a room that looked just exactly as a room ought to look, he was filled with a grateful, loving feeling that would express itself.

"Jesus Christ helped all this out this way, did n't he, father? Since I knew he cared about me, no matter where I was or how things were, I 've felt just as good—so different—and now he 's brought this about. My!"

Mr. Roslyn was on his knees by the boy's bed, his arm around the slight figure, and holding the thin hand. He had always been a praying man, but his

prayers had been agonizing wrestlings with God for his son. Now it seemed so different. The difference appalled him. His former attitude humiliated and abased him.

"Lord, thou knowest, thou knowest!" and his heart would say no more.

CHAPTER XVIII

PLANS

Mr. Roslyn had always entertained a thorough respect and regard for his lawyer. Now he abominated him. His lawyer was with him at his own home. He was urging on him all sorts of impossible things in regard to the identity of John.

"If you are satisfied that he is your son, that is a good thing, but you haven't proof that will really settle the matter for any one else, and if you die, and your will should be contested, and his identity brought up in the courts, I say—I say things wouldn't go as you wish. Now settle the matter by adopting him."

Mr. Roslyn burned with wrath. Adopt his own son! Throw a slur on him at the outset! Never!

A servant at the door said that a priest wanted to see Mr. Roslyn, and refused to go away or wait.

"Take him in the print-room. I will see him at once." He was glad to get away from this beast of a lawyer.

The priest evidently had something to say, and glided at once into his mission without preliminaries.

"My duties call me to our Hospital of the Sacred

Heart. We have had there for some time a woman slowly dying of an incurable disease. She died yesterday. Knowing that death approached, she made final confession. A portion of her confession she desired me to transmit to Mr. David Roslyn at this address. Any such commission it is my habit to execute at once, lest I be prevented. Whether this concerns you, you will know as I read it. I wrote it down in her own words, omitting irrelevances." He read:

"About nine years ago, I think in June, I talked with a little boy playing near his house, and got him to come for a walk with me. He was about two years old, only very smart to talk. We got a long piece off, and nobody came out for him. He was nicely dressed, and his house was a rich house, and I thought if I took him off they would offer money for finding him, and I would take him back and get it. So I took him just as he was. But there was such a terrible hubbub about it, and such lots of policemen out, and detectives and all, that I was terribly frightened. So I dressed him as a little girl and took him out of the city with me, thinking I would find some way to get rid of him and get the money. But I was afraid to. He was a nice little boy, and I liked him, and took good care of him. I had him two years dressed as a girl, but people asked questions and worried me, so when I went to the city I darkened him up and dressed him as a boy, and sold him to a half-blind

Italian who said he was going away. I never heard more about him, but it might help to find him."

The priest rose. "Whether that concerns you or not I don't know. That was my part."

"My dear sir, it is of the very greatest importance. I must beg to detain you a few moments longer. Will you step this way? The boy is my son. I have but just recovered him, and this that you have read me makes some things perfectly clear."

"Now," he thought, "if this legal crank in here can't fix up something to appease himself out of this, he can stay dissatisfied. I'm not!"

But it made a difference. The story now had a relatable sequence, and all those who were concerned, and who desired to relate an interesting story of loss and recovery, now had a satisfactory history in all particulars.

"Uncle David, you will be a good many dollars poorer now, won't you?" said Laramie one day at the table, a mischievous light in her eyes.

"How so?"

"Why, Uncle David! you can't have forgotten the reward you offered to any one leading to Winthrop's recovery! Tom will be quite a rich individual."

"That's so! I never once thought of it! But he shall have it, Laramie; don't you worry."

Very favorable reports were made of Reddy's behaviour, and, as usual, he had no trouble in making

himself liked. Mr. Roslyn and Laramie both thought that it would be sufficiently safe to arrange for the coming of Mother Lide, Kathie, and Tom, but how and where seemed to be not nearly so easily settled.

"You see, Uncle David," said Laramie, "when anybody with money tries to stand off and do things for that sort of people the results are always unfortunate. The right sort of assistance—something that really is wanted—would perhaps serve a good purpose, but we do n't really know how to go to work."

Mr. Roslyn's idea was a nice little place outside the city to be given as a gift.

Laramie doubted the feasibility of that, but could hardly say why. John was very little help. He told of the Krafs' place, and of how Kathie enjoyed her week there, but it did not seem to settle matters. Reddy was hardly one to consult, as he had been so many years away from his mother, and was having struggle enough to adapt himself to his new business environment.

"Laramie," said John, "if you would just talk to Tom everything would straighten itself out at once."

That settled it, and that was how it happened that Tom and Laramie walked in a park together talking earnestly. Laramie had stayed over night in the city and had caught Tom at the apple stand at the hour John told her to go there. She quite fell in love with Mother Lide's twinkling blue eyes and

round face, bearing their record of years of hardship, suffering, and unfailing cheerfulness.

"Tom, the question is just this,—What does Mrs. Lidedell want? Reddy's wages won't support her yet, and still it seems as though it would be better for her to have the comfort of her son's companionship as long as possible. If Uncle David knew what she would like he could manage something without anybody's knowing he had done any more than take a friendly interest. Would she like a place outside the city, near by?"

Tom's face shadowed and Laramie saw it. Then he laughed.

"We 're city folks, Miss Laramie; trees and birds and such and grass—oh, they 're nice for an hour or so, or for people that like such things, but Mother Lide, now, and even Kathie, why, they 're used to bricks and the noise of people all the time, and to seeing people."

"It must be in the city then," said Laramie smiling. "You suggest some good plan."

Tom thought a while. "Mother Lide 's most too wore out to do the stand business constant, but she 's always done something so long she would n't be content to sit around like some of the women. I wish they could be down by the Bowers there. That is a good deal better neighborhood than our tenement; awful nice people, and just Mother Lide's kind. The houses in that block are most all little bits of

things and the people are n't packed so tight, so they can't keep up the saloons like they do around us; and it 's quieter."

"I see," said Laramie. "And you think that neighborhood would suit, do you? And do you think Reddy would be satisfied to go home nights and behave?"

"Yes—I guess so," a trifle hesitatingly.

"And if we—Reddy, I mean—could rent, say three rooms, that would be about what they would like, would it?"

"Oh, my, yes," and Tom's eyes danced. "And say, do you think Mr. Roslyn would give me a place in the store like he said once? I could n't bear to stay here alone with everybody there. I 've got my good clothes yet, have n't wore 'em, so I 'd look all right. You see, I bought this shirt and pants so as to save 'em."

"Yes, I 'm sure, Tom."

"Perhaps Reddy could find some place where Mother Lide could sell something. She always wanted, years ago, she said, to have a thread and needle store, that 's what she calls it; and that would be a good neighborhood for that."

"I think I understand all about it now, Tom. John said you could tell just what to do."

"John's taken to gammon, has he? He 's the planner! Fellow that do n't do a thing but think ought to be able to get up something."

Laramie was able to plan things herself when she could get an idea of what was desirable. She and her uncle very soon had things as they wanted them.

Mr. Roslyn bought the building the Bowers were in,—it was the most disreputable building on the street,—and the one next to it, which was empty. Through his agent, he informed the Bowers that he meant to remodel their building but would quarter them in another until the repairs were made and that then they could occupy the same amount of room as before in the new building for the same rent.

Mr. Bower was afraid there was some catch in it and Mrs. Bower was positive no improvements worth anything would be made.

To sustain himself, Mr. Bower got out Mrs. Bower's little, old black Bible which she had received as a girl for attendance at Sunday-school, and read a psalm. It had already become a habit with him to do so. He read nothing but the psalms so far. He read them aloud. He read them to himself. He learned them. Their phraseology clung to him. They uplifted and comforted him. Their strength entered into him. His wife did not care for psalms, but she listened always, and tried to enter into his feelings, she was so unspeakably glad that Robert had found something. She herself preferred to read in the first three Gospels, a verse or so at a time, and she found comfort in thinking of the Saviour as a present help; and having by nature a

strong sense of duty, she felt invigorated to take up her daily cares and duties as something more hopeful and beautiful than she had ever found them before, and she felt as though they might all at last rise out of the oppressive failure of former years.

The repairs on the buildings astonished them both. They were made over. When all was finished the grocery store was as fine as a store could be, with its counter and shelves and bins and boxes and conveniences, beautiful with paint and fresh with plaster, and with a handsome window and entrance.

In the next building was a little bit of a store with an equally pretty window and entrance, counter and shelves. There was also a door between the two stores, but that was closed. The buildings were entirely altered in the rear. The Bowers had the same, one room down-stairs and two up-stairs, but the staircase was a very different matter, and there was a bath-room and a modern sink and a remarkably pretty window. Back of the little short store and on one side of it were three rooms and a bath-room. One room was a delightful affair with a bay window. Above were two rooms.

The fence at the rear was rebuilt, new soil was put into the yard and sodded, and it was rumored that trees were to be set out. A back porch at each house and clothes-poles completed the causes for envy in the neighborhood. There was no such complete, modern, pretty building for blocks.

The Bowers were overwhelmed with congratulations on their success. And the agent was overrun with people wishing to rent the other half, until he hung out a sign of "Already rented," on it.

Reddy was sent to look at the house and rent it for his mother.

"I own those buildings myself, William," said Mr. Roslyn, "and I am making an experiment on good accommodations at low rents. Just how long I shall keep it up I can't say, but I mean you and the family now in to have the first renting. Tom said your mother would like to keep a store, and I mean to advance, for the stock, whatever she chooses. Your salary, so long as you give satisfaction and are willing to use a proper proportion of it for the support of your mother and the little girl, will be larger than would otherwise be possible, simply because I am under such obligation to your mother."

Reddy understood perfectly, but when he saw the house and store, the bay window and the bath-room, he just said, "Oh, mother," under his breath. He was like his mother. He understood her, and she understood him, and he had always loved her and clung to her and missed her, and now that he had crossed the gulf between them, and broken down the wall of separation, he longed to have her with him, and to repay her, and make her happy.

Mr. Roslyn had made an effort that the right kind of young men should get hold of Reddy, and so it

happened that already he had been initiated into a great many new and Christian things. The gymnasium, the reading-room, a class or two, some lectures, and particularly "meetings" as they called them, all had helped to make much that belongs to Christian hope, life, and experience partly clear to him; but still in his thought he besought Tom's Friend to be his friend, to help him and not to leave him; and he plead very earnestly as he stood in the little store that he might be a great deal to his mother; but he would not have dared to call it a prayer.

"I believe William Lidedell is going to do well," said Mr. Roslyn at the table, after he had seen Reddy on the completion of renting the building. "He will make a man yet. I am sure of it!"

CHAPTER XIX

FINIS

Reddy wrote to his mother to come, sent the fare for all, and told when he would meet her.

John wrote to Mother Lide that Reddy had rented a nice place for her with a little store in it, that his father said he could make her any present he chose, and that he chose to partly stock the little store as a thread-and-needle shop, such as she used to describe to them, and to put in what furniture he wanted before they came. "And tell Kathie," he said, "that she has a lovely sitting-room with a bay window, so she can see everything in the street, and with a door opening right into the store, so she can see and hear what goes on in there, and she is to have the loveliest surprises she ever dreamed of. Emily never came anywhere near it."

Mr. Roslyn wrote a very brief, business-like communication to Tom, requesting him to report at his residence at six o'clock of the day of his arrival in the city.

Kathie was taken quite comfortably to the train, and some of the tenement people, Frau Kraf, Gretchen, and Hans were all there to see them off. Tom was in his good clothes again, and was very

nearly as excited as Kathie herself, though he did his best to keep his feelings from cropping out.

Reddy was at the station with a hack. It was just noon. The slender young fellow, kissing his mother and Kathie, and shaking hands vigorously with Tom, and asking the same questions over and over again without any thought of the answers, won many a sympathizing smile from fellow passengers.

"Where's the place, Reddy?" asked Tom.

"Next to Bower's. Tom, you just wait till you see it! The Grand Duke is a brick after all's said and done."

Tom knew he meant Mr. Roslyn.

When they drove up to the newest, and by all odds finest, little building on the street, and got out by the shining new store and delightful bay window, Kathie clasped her hands, shut her eyes, and squealed with joy. She opened them to find that John, radiant of face and beautiful in Kathie's eyes as to his apparel, was hugging her and kissing her. He did the same to Mother Lide, and Tom laughed outright, and Mother Lide exclaimed:

"Oh, the boy Johnnie's after gettin' to be!"

Laramie had come down with John to give final touches to the rooms, but she had taken her departure on seeing the hack.

Inside, joy was let loose. Kathie was seated at once in a wheeled and cushioned chair that she could propel herself, and when they could take their atten-

tion from that the store had to be examined, and it turned out that to Mother Lide it was like a longed-for doll to a child; to sit in social state and sell the best quality of thread, needles, tape, and notions to chatty neighbors was a dream evidently about to be realized. She could hardly be persuaded to leave it, though Kathie was turning with longing eyes toward her sitting-room.

And such a room! White curtains, pictures, several potted plants, a table with a most giddy work-basket upon it, knitting-needles, and hints of various colored wools in a bag, a blue and white carpet, a very dream of a lounge, a rocking-chair evidently especially ordained for Mother Lide, and a little low-hung bookcase with bright-backed books!

Every one of them laughed to choke off the lump that would come just at the sight of that pale, happy little face. And then came a bedroom with real furniture in it, and a bath-room, and neither Kathie nor Mother Lide had ever seen a bath-room before; and then the living room; and there was more in the surprise line.

The table was all set for dinner, with a table-cloth, and blue and white dishes, and a tumbler for everybody, and flowers in the middle. And there was a china-closet with glass doors and dishes in it, and a wooden-doored closet with cooking things in it, and a wide, low window that reminded Mother Lide of her childhood; and a wide back porch; and a stove

with the dinner all ready where it would keep warm. Mrs. Bower had cooked it, and a dinner it was long to be remembered, for Mrs. Bower could cook.

Reddy had his dinner, and had to go back to the store. He could n't eat very well, the loving pride in his mother's every look choked him so. But Kathie ate. Tom and John said they could see her grow fat.

They all cleared things up together. Tom and John both had a secret misgiving that things would not look as they did now very long.

Mother Lide seemed to answer their thought.

"Now I 'll be keeping store right here, and with Kathie to let me know when any one comes in, I can take good care of all these nice things, John. Kathie likes things pretty, and I 'm thinkin' Billy does, and I 'll be after cleanin' up fine!"

Kathie was put on the lounge and dropped asleep, exhausted with pleasure. Tom went in to see the Bowers, and John explained to Mother Lide that if Tom agreed, he was to live at the Roslyn house, and he would n't be back that night, anyway.

Over on the Bowers' side, pleasure at seeing Tom was enthusiastically expressed. Bobby fondled one hand and Daisy the other; Mrs. Bower praised him and welcomed him without stint; Mr. Bower showed as plainly as possible how glad he was to see him, while the improvements were shown again and again, especially in the store. Trade had kept up well, and

the neighbors were friendly. They were all well. "And Tom," said Mrs. Bower, solemnly, "I believe it was your Friend sojournin' here with us in our misery did it all!"

"I'm getting to see it, Tom," said Mr. Bower. "The words of the Psalmist are a great strength to me, and sometimes light seems to break all around me, and at all times I know the light is there—and that's what I never did know before. Come in often if you can, Tom; there'll be nobody on earth we'll be gladder to see."

It was getting late when Tom and John started off, glad to be alone together, full of new thoughts and hopes, and yet little able to talk.

"Tom, father wants you to stay with me, and live at our house, so we can be together. You'd like it, would n't you?"

"Why, why, why, John—I do n't seem to belong in that house. It's different for you."

"Oh, you'd belong, fast enough, but I was n't to say anything about it. You are to stay all night, anyway."

It was exciting enough. John had to show Tom a hundred things, and they were laughing and going off in gales of amusement such as John had never been guilty of before. Mr. Roslyn in the lower hall heard them.

"Tom's just got to stay; that's all. He's a regular boy; and Winthrop—Winthrop is n't."

So, after dinner, he had Tom in the dimly lighted library for a talk. He felt no awkwardness now in handling Tom, not the slightest.

"Tom, my boy, I am anxious to do everything possible to preserve the existing friendship between you and Winthrop. I will frankly own that it is chiefly for Winthrop's good. I mean by that that he needs you, I think, more than you need him. If you are going to take a man's place in the world, as I expect him to do, your education for a long time must be similar, whatever either of you chooses to do. Proper preparation is essential to success. So for a time, at any rate, I want you to make your home here at the house. Your pursuits, clothes, advantages, and restrictions will be practically the same. Now, Tom, my boy, don't you for a moment permit yourself to become uneasy. I can see you squirm. You must have an education and other things to permit you to avail yourself of the position in our wholesale house which you shall surely have as soon as you are fitted for it. Oh, yes; education is the main thing, and it doesn't go on all the time by books by any means; summers I shall turn you into the store, at the bottom, and expect you to learn the whole business inside and out. But that won't be enough. Brains and ability are good, but *educated* brains and ability are better. Our house, my boy, needs the best that can be had. As for your independence, have no hesitation. Every cent you spend will be your own.

I hold a sufficient sum in your name to defray all possible expenses until you are on a money-earning basis in the establishment. Where does it come from? Why, my dear boy, for nine years a reward has been offered to any one enabling me to recover my son. The money has been transferred to your name. The obligation, will, of course, always remain wholly on my side. Now, sir, with such deference to your opinion as I shall accord to Winthrop's, I shall arrange such a course of life for the next few years as will best prepare both of you for your manhood.

"Come to me, Tom." His voice was very low and gentle; he placed both hands on Tom's shoulders. "I 'm your friend, Tom, wholly. Be mine. You have missed a great deal, as Winthrop has, through not having a father. Do n't miss it any more. Do you understand me, Tom? Do you believe me?"

Tom was n't used to it. He fought his best against it, and then he broke down and cried like a baby, and Mr. Roslyn held him down on his knee and let him cry, and enjoyed it. Tom would never hold away from him after that.

"Well, you little burglar, you," he whispered, "is it a bargain? I love you, Tom. Come!"

"I—I—I 'm glad of it," sputtered Tom, and then he laughed, and Mr. Roslyn laughed, and he shook hands solemnly with Tom, and made him promise

to be his firm friend and treat him as one in return.

"Now we've been solemn enough, have n't we? I did n't dare talk with you before dinner, for fear it would take away your appetite, and I am afraid now I have ruined your digestion. Here, Tom, I'll show you some of my treasures"—and rather sadly and rather reluctantly he opened some drawers back in his desk and showed Tom a miniature of his dead wife, a number of pictures of John as a baby, and a few little toys.

"It used to seem to me like a grave of all my hopes, of my very life. And now it is not. Tom, whatever happens to you, never lose sight of trust, faith in God. Never! That would be the worst thing that could happen to you in this world."

So Tom's immediate career was settled, and it was a very light-hearted pair of boys who sat up in a room that had been fixed for them as a sort of study, den, and workshop, and talked things over.

"Tom," said John gravely, "what do you believe was the best thing ever happened to me?"

"Why, finding your father!" said Tom in surprise.

"That was a piece of it, the way I think of it. It was your telling me about our Friend, about Christ; the understanding about it. I was feeling so, oh, I can't explain it! I believe I would have waked up some morning dead," with a laugh, "and then I

understood about that, and felt it, and things all looked different, and I felt as though I could just pick up and live as long as I needed to, and each day I seemed to understand more, and care more, and this all seems a piece of it. And I'm so glad I don't feel different here, inside now. The loving feeling came before, just because I knew he cared, the Christ."

"It's queer, is n't it?" said Tom slowly. "I know just what you mean. Now, I'm not any like you. Everything suits me, and I always had a good time, but there's just no comparison between knowing, feeling, believing in our Friend, and not knowing. I did n't tell you, I guess—I never told anybody—but to me, he, Jesus, is a friend, my age and size. He's—oh, I can't tell you about it!—I love him." Tom's face looked white in his eagerness. "He's so—everything. He's a boy for me, and all the rest beside; and he cares, and he knows, and I sort of grow up to it more all the time. I know it is n't so to every one. To Mr. Bower, now, it's different; and to Kathie he is Emily's Saviour; and to Reddy, Jesus Christ is a real helper, but not so very close; and to Miss Roslyn he is near and compassionate, but just the Jesus she reads about in her book, I mean the Jesus of Palestine as he lived and taught there. And to you he is the Jesus who returned to God from earth, and loves and cares for us all—is n't he?"

"And to Laramie?" John's eyes twinkled.

"I 'm not going to talk about Miss Laramie," said Tom, reproachfully. His devotion to Laramie was an open secret to John.

"And to father?"

"I can sort of feel how it is, but it is n't my business to talk about folks who know more than I do, now is it?"

"No; perhaps not. But I know what you mean, Tom. We could all have our very best life and friend in Jesus, no matter how we 're made, if we only understood and would give our hearts a chance to grow out toward him."

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